

まおゆう魔王勇者

(3)聖鍵(せいけん)遠征軍 著／橙乃ままれ



③ 聖鍵(せいけん)遠征軍
まおゆう魔王勇者



著／橙乃ままれ

e_b' enterbrain

Maoyu Mao Yusha Volume 3: The Holy Crusades

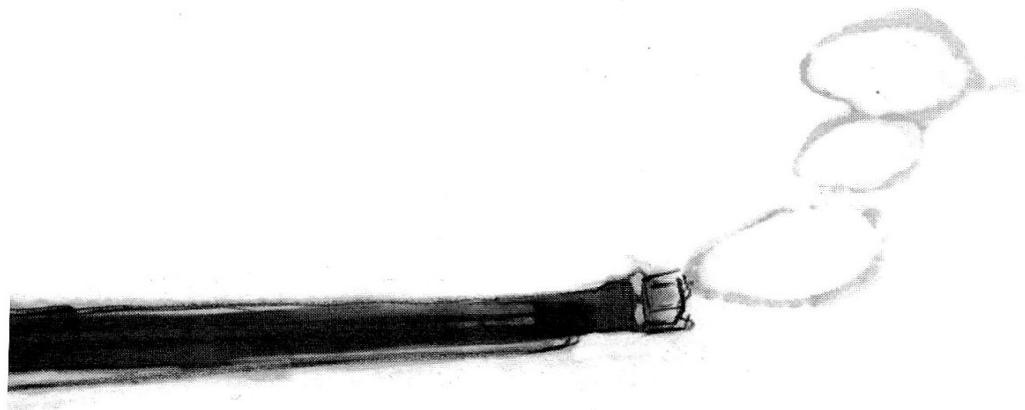
Written By: Mamare Touno

Illustrated By: Keinojou Mizutama, toi8

English Translation by NanoDesu Translations

Disclaimer: The work translated on this website is the legal property of its original copyright holder. It is translated here without monetary incentive solely for the purposes of promoting domestic interest in the work and improving personal language proficiency. Should the work be licensed for English translation or upon request by the original copyright holders, please stop distribution of this document at once.

Please send any and all comments to NanoDesuTranslations@gmail.com.



Crown Prince Marshal

"These muskets provide a limitless source for cheap soldiers, that resource so indispensable in war. After all, we have an inexhaustible supply of serfs and now even they can be thrust into battle."

The Demon King

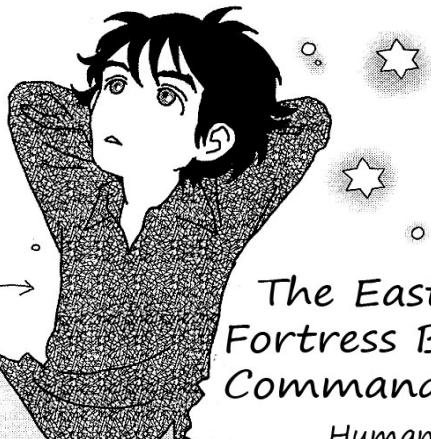
A demon. Indoors-type.

When it comes to knowledge or cleavage or upper arm strength, she has it all in spades.



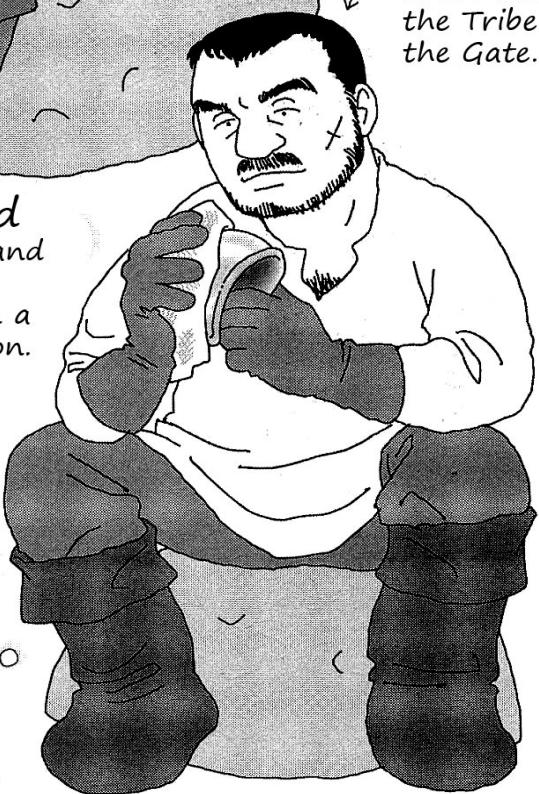
The Hero

A human. Athletic. Thinks he's a klutz but actually is a natural charmer. He's still a virgin though.



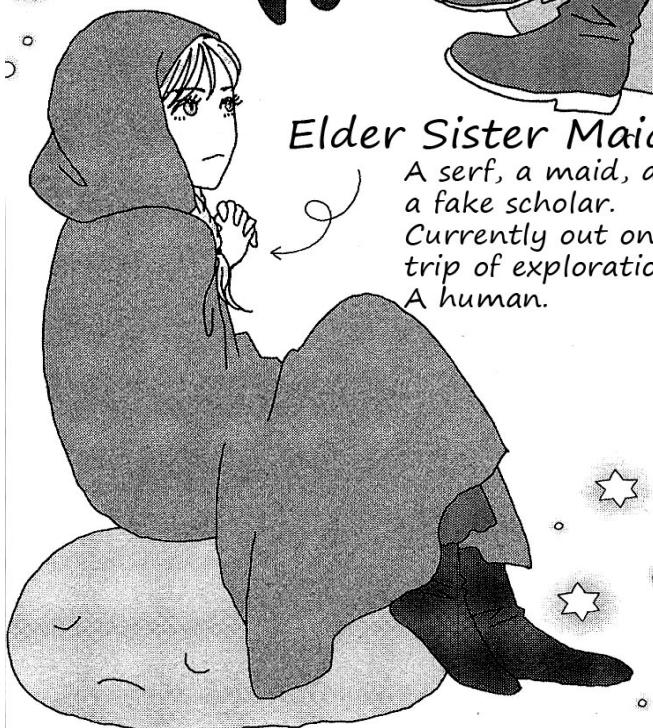
The East Fortress Base Commander

Human.
Becomes the first head of the Tribe of the Gate.



Elder Sister Maid

A serf, a maid, and a fake scholar.
Currently out on a trip of exploration.
A human.



Crown Prince Marshal

Human. Hero of the Holy Kingdom. Introduced muskets into his army and is advancing troops into the South.

Sigiled King of the Pale

King of the Pales.

The old king had suddenly died, and well... *cough cough*. Anyways, a pretty suspicious character.

Has carved seals in both eyes, and is a candidate for the next Demon King.



The Fire Dragon Lord

Chief of the dragons. Father of the princess.

Was entrusted by the Demon King to act as the chairman of the Demon Parliament.

His moustache isn't his fur, but it's more like a catfish. Or something.



Butler

A human. Friend of the former hero. Active on the front lines in various places and also sometimes sexually harasses girls.

The Female Paladin

Human. Friend of the former hero. Leader of the Kohan Monastery and an army commander. Is she better suited for being an old nun or a warrior? Well... *cough cough*



Disciple Bard

Sometimes a writer. Currently exploring.



The Silver Tiger Lord

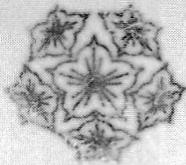
Chief of the beast people. Strong. Pledged his allegiance towards the Demon King. Many mysteries surround his private life.



The Queen of Fairies

Heading towards the Lone Winter King as the envoy of the demons.





もくじ

名もなき吟遊詩人の唄	8
1章 「魔王っ！ 何でだよ、魔王っ!!」	9
2章 「魔王不在の忽鄰塔」	25
3章 「勇者も唇についてるぞ。——ほら」	71
4章 「お二人が、大好きです」	127
5章 「退屈だ。人間とはこんなにも弱いのか」	179
6章 「精霊はこれを欲し給う」	215
7章 「君たちは、野盗じゃない」	257
8章 「あれが銃。——マスケットだ」	295
9章 「血のながれる河の船の上で」	321
10章 「一緒に、行かないか？」	343
地図・付録	361

Contents

The Song of the Nameless Bard	2
Chapter 1, “Demon King! What's going on, Demon King!!”	4
Chapter 2, “The Kurultai without the Demon King”	21
Chapter 3, “Look, you've got some on your mouth, Hero.”	72
Chapter 4, “I love the both of you.”	139
Chapter 5, “How boring. Humans are so weak after all.”	199
Chapter 6, “This is what the Fairies want.”	239
Chapter 7, “You Are Not bandits.”	288
Chapter 8, “This is order —— The Musket.”	330
Chapter 9, “In a Boat on a Bloodstained River.”	354
Chapter 10, “Shall we go together?”	377
Maps and Explanations	395
Translation Credits	400

The Song of the Nameless Bard

If only all was that should be.

The teachings of the one and only Church would be correct.

One gold coin would be worth one gold coin.

Against the evil Demons, the power of humans would unite.

And against smallpox, all one can do is pray.

The Demon King and the Hero joined hands and walked down the road of thorns.

From the light of the lantern, they could see the bodies of many people.

The sparks of the fires of war had been ignited.

The Church and the Southern United Kingdoms had a **Schism**,

The Central Continent had **Declared War**.

The Church split into two Churches,

The price of wheat shot up, gold coins became useless,

Searching for freedom, the serfs migrated to the South,

The hungry masses ate the **Heretical** potato.

As Human clashed with Human, **Human and Demon** joined forces.

The Southern United Kingdoms acquired **Smallpox Medicine** from the Demons,

And the Holy Empire, the bulwark against Demonic invasion, signed a **Secret Agreement** with the Demons of the Pale,

The Fire Dragon Lady, seeking **Salt**, appeared in front of the Young Merchant.

While the Demon King and the Hero went missing, the ones who stayed to protect the Human World were the Kings and the three Disciples, the disciples of the Demon King.

At the same time, the strong currents of fate were brewing,

Standing in front of the entire Demon Race, the Demon King proclaimed the **Kurultai**.

Opposing conciliation with the Humans, despite overwhelming consensus,

The Demon King of the Pale played an unexpected card,

And called for the **Impeachment** of the Demon King.

Chapter 1, “Demon King! What's going on, Demon King!!”

— — — The Demon World, on a Retreat by the Lake

Disciple Bard: “Hey! Hey!”

Disciple Bard: “What's with this worn-out house, dammit. Eh? What's this?! Food?! Why is it so sloppy? Oi! Are you there? Get up!”

Disciple Engineer: “Yaaaawn. What's up?”

Disciple Bard: “I'm back.”

Disciple Engineer: “Oh? Where from?”

Disciple Bard: “I told you I was going to the City of the Gate!”

Disciple Engineer: “Really? Now that you say it, I haven't seen you in a bit.”

Disciple Bard: “You haven't seen me in two months! You damn engineer! I know you haven't eaten yet, so I got you some home-cooked food. Here, there's tea too.”

Disciple Engineer: “Thanks. Yaaawn.”

Disciple Bard: “This is what always happens when I leave you alone.”

Disciple Engineer: “No choice. I've had to study crafting and designing, maintaining and testing. Civil Engineering is quite a daunting task. I can't even say I understand even one book out of the entire library that our teacher left us. I haven't even really understood Flood Control!.”

Disciple Bard: “I told you not to drown yourself in all those texts. No matter how much you learn, if you don't try to apply it, it's useless.”

Disciple Engineer: “Even if you say that... Civil engineering is nothing like music or art, you need quite a bit of manpower and money to do it. For someone like me, with barely a penny to my name, there's nothing I could possibly do on my

own."

Disciple Bard: "If you say something like that, I guess you're just being lazy..."

Disciple Engineer: "Don't say that. I've just finished fixing up the *Irrigation* system for the nearby village."

Disciple Bard: "Oh right. How did that turn out?"

Disciple Engineer: "Well, the productivity has gone up. Civil Engineering isn't something that can be completed instantly so I'll have to observe this order for a few years before I can say anything concretely, but I would say the productivity has gone up significantly. Now we're just waiting for the river to bring the fertilisers to the fields."

Disciple Bard: "Wow, looks like you did a good job."

Disciple Engineer: "Well. — Mmm, this is delicious."

Disciple Bard: "And how much did they pay you?"

Disciple Engineer: "Not bad. Take a look."

Disciple Bard: "Wow! It's a sack of gold! We're rich!"

Disciple Engineer: "Heh."

Disciple Bard: "Wow, this is really not bad."

Disciple Engineer: "When I wasn't making any money, it must have been really troublesome for you."

Disciple Bard: "Well, yeah. I mean, a poet is paid daily."

Disciple Engineer: "These are my earnings over a long period of time. It's the same amount of effort as moving a mountain."

Disciple Bard: "I see... Then, I'll save these for you?"

Disciple Engineer: "Yeah, sure."

Disciple Bard: “...”



Civil Engineering: Different from mechanical or electrical engineering, civil engineering involves the reshaping of the natural terrain (the earth, the rivers, the shorelines, etc.) in order to make things more convenient for society or to prevent natural disasters. Civil engineering is a field of study which deals mostly with the construction of facilities (bridges, dams, roads, ports, etc.) for the good of society.

Flood Control: This refers to the protection of lives and livelihoods from floods caused by rising water levels in rivers and from strong waves. To achieve this, floodgates and dams are built, and larger projects such as completely altering the course of a river can be done. On a side note, altering the water network for ease of water transportation or irrigation, such as the building of locks or canals, is referred to as Water Infrastructure and is distinct from Flood Control. However, in real life, civil engineers may be called on to construct facilities which execute both of these functions at the same time.

Irrigation: This refers to the provision of water for agricultural purposes, such as by building canals from rivers or pumps.

Disciple Engineer: “...Yumyum.”

Disciple Bard: “So this was a one-time thing?”

Disciple Engineer: “Yeah.”

Disciple Bard: “—What should we do?”

Disciple Engineer: “Hmm, we haven't decided on the next contract. And without

our teacher around, it's going to be fairly difficult to secure one."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah..."

Disciple Engineer: "I've got a few projects I can source around for, but if you wanted to do something on a larger-scale, like mass irrigation or the construction of dams, canals, or even roads, you would need the approval and sponsorship of a Khan of one of the bigger Tribes. I'm just a civilian after all, so I don't have the connections."

Disciple Bard: "What an impoverished profession."

Disciple Engineer: "What are you saying? Civil Engineering is the King of professions."

Disciple Bard: "Heh."

Disciple Engineer: "Our teacher said that."

Disciple Bard: "That's because she's prone to saying lofty things like that..."

Disciple Engineer: "She's a genius."

Disciple Bard: "She acts like one because she's very lofty."

Disciple Engineer: "She's a genius."

Disciple Bard: "Fine, we'll leave it at that. Here."

Disciple Engineer: "Eh? What's that?"

Disciple Bard: "Let's move."

Disciple Engineer: "Where to?"

Disciple Bard: "You haven't got any work, right? The City of the Gate has got some beautiful scenery right now. And you can also try to find work in repairing the City Walls and roads. Trade is rapidly increasing there, so they've got a lot of tax revenue. Furthermore, there are lots and lots of different Tribespeople residing there. A young Fairy maiden like myself and a young Banshee engineer

like you will surely find work to do."

Disciple Engineer: "That's true."

Disciple Bard: "What do you think?"

Disciple Engineer: "Well, apart from our teacher's books, I don't have a lot I need to take with us."

Disciple Bard: "So shall we go?"

Disciple Engineer: "There'd better be some massive project."

Disciple Bard: "I think I'll bring one Saga with me. I can feel a good wind blowing on our trip!"

— — — The Kurultai, the Demon King's Pavilion

The Demon King: "Well, well."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty..."

The Demon King: "I didn't expect that they would have such a hand to play. I was too naïve... I was also relying on my position as the Demon King."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "...I'm sorry. We'd just gotten the discussion to a good point before this happened. At this rate..."

The Hero: "No, that is my responsibility."

The Chief Maid: "Hero...?"

The Hero: "I failed to warn you about it. — The Mage asked me to look for a copy of *The Demon Annals* and research it. I completely ignored that. — It's my fault."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "No, that's not it. We were so focused on obtaining the ceasefire that we forgot to consider other paths which the Kurultai could have taken. The result is that now I am powerless."

The Hero: "Don't say that."

The Chief Maid: "That's right, it's too early to give up."

The Demon King: "But what can we do in these two hours? Since he's nailed the final into our coffin, any attempt I make at contacting the other Khans will just look like I'm desperately trying to save myself. The only thing we can do now is try to make sure that no one can contest the seat."



Saga: These are epic poems from Northern Europe. They are massive works of literature that rarely feature deities or gods but focus mostly on the exploits of brave men. In today's context, strong works of writing, particularly those with sequels, are often termed as sagas as well.

The Hero: "You mean kill them all?"

The Demon King: "That's right."

The Hero: "But that really defeats the purpose."

The Chief Maid: "Why? Didn't you say before that in the past there were examples of Demon Kings who would obliterate the Khans who refused to listen to the word of the Demon King?"

The Demon King: "But there was only one."

The Hero: "In other words, to achieve a consensus, it is possible to destroy the one remaining opposition to the motion. We do have extreme methods such as obliteration at our disposal but in the end, if we're not able to achieve the support of the other seven Khans, we would have to obliterate all of them."

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Demon King: "In this situation, let's assume that four of the Khans agree to vote for me. Especially if they find out that I sanctioned the kill of that Khan, then I definitely wouldn't have the support of those other four Khans."

The Chief Maid: "That's..."

The Demon King: "It doesn't necessarily mean that they're not going to support me now, but we can't count on my position as the Demon King. The King of the Pale knows this as well. My position is not stable, and if there are any divisions as a result of this decision, then the entire Demon Race might fracture as well. We may be thrust back into a chaotic world..."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "This will be a momentous occasion, but all we can do now is watch and see..."

— — — The Kurultai, the Grand Pavilion

The King of the Pale: "Right, it's time."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Don't worry, it'll turn out fine."

The Chief Maid: "But, but—"

The Hero: "Protect the Demon King. We may have another chance yet."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "The sun has gone down."

The King of the Pale: "Well then. The green rays of the sun have died down. The deadline has come."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Shall we make a decision?"

The Baron of Steel: "Let's."

The Cyclops: "...Understood."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

The King of the Pale: "In that case, since I brought up the motion, let me begin. Whether or not we Demons want to go to war or not, we are currently at war. The Humans could invade us at any moment. At a time like this, to have a weak-willed Demon King is tantamount to treason against our people. We the Tribe of the Pale vote to impeach the Demon King."

The Queen of Fairies: "The Tribe of the Fairies would like to acknowledge the contributions the Demon King has made. Not only has she stopped the in-fighting between the Tribes, she has also made widespread paper and other civil technologies, and truly enriched the culture of the Demon World."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Culture? Bah!"

The Queen of Fairies: "We may be small in stature, but that is what is important to us. Every fairy under the light of the moon, in the glistering forests, supports the present Demon King whole-heartedly."

The Demon King: "..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "To us, the Tribe of the Fang, might is right. We will follow the most powerful person. In times of war, we display our strength, and in times of peace we merely reserve its use. The present Demon King has yet to personally take part in a single expedition, so I cannot say anything for her abilities. We cannot support a person whose strength remains unknown to us. We the Tribe of the Fang vote to impeach the Demon King."

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "With regards to the war, we have already voiced out our opinion. What would happen if the Demon King were to change? We cannot guarantee that the next Demon King will not be a battle-crazy

extremist, or one who is willing to exercise wanton destruction, unlike the present Demon King. We have always advocated solving our disputes with the Demon King using personal communication, without resorting to elections. This is the unwritten law of this world. In support of the stability of the Demon World, and to respect the institutions which we live by, we the Tribe of Banshees support the Demon King.”

The Baron of Steel: “My Tribe requires the treasures which are overflowing in the Human World. We thank the present Demon King for helping us to see just how valuable these are, but we cannot cooperate with humans after all. They operate in a different manner from us Demons, and without any kind of long-term contract or rights, my Tribe is afraid of the possible abuse, exploitation, and other despicable acts that may be committed by these self-righteous Humans during our interactions with them. We cannot co-exist with humans after all. — We, the Tribe of Automatons, vote to impeach the Demon King.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “We, the Tribe of Fiends, will take the middle ground on this matter, as always. In other words, we abstain.”

The King of the Pale: “Hmph, you're just trying to play both sides so you'll never get burned.”

The Cyclops: “...The Demon King... is too small... We feel... someone bigger... is better than someone... smaller. That's why... we feel that changing... the Demon King is better... than keeping her...”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “Four...”

The Chief Maid: “It's over...”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “The movement to impeach the Demon King has been agreed on! We now enter the era of a new Demon King!”

The Baron of Steel: “A new Demon King...”

The King of the Pale: “Let us commence it immediately. But a twenty year reign,

it's not very long. It's not short either. There hasn't been a case where the Demon King's throne is empty, but the previous Demon King is still alive."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Shut up."

The King of the Pale: "Huh? What are you saying? My lord. It has already been decided. Just what do you intend to do about that?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I said shut up!" *Breathes fire.*

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "...?"

The King of the Pale: "Then I shall shut up. So, what do you have to say?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I haven't voted yet."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What are you talking about? It's already been decided!"

The King of the Pale: "That's right. So even if you support the present Demon King, nothing will change. You've done nothing."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I didn't say that. We are one of the oldest and most ancient of the Tribes in the Demon Race, the Tribe of the Dragons. Why do you initiate such proceedings without even consulting us first!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Because the result won't change..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Shut up! I'm not talking about that. Do not take my Tribe lightly! That is what I'm talking about!"

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "You could have just said that at the start."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Indeed."

The King of the Pale: "Hmph. Well. Fine. That's a valid point as well. Let's hear what you've got to say. But I'm certain whatever you have to say will not influence the result of this Kurultai."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

The Queen of Fairies: "Please give us your final view."

The Demon King: "..."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Vote then."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "..."

The King of the Pale: "What are you keeping quiet for! Didn't you tell us not to treat you lightly, but now you're keeping all silent and not saying a single word. This is a waste of time. Give us your answer!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "That's right! You're taking this whole Kurultai for a pack of fools with that attitude."

Door slams open.

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hope I'm not late."

Aide-de-Camp pants.

The Demon King: "Eh?"

The Hero: "The Base Commander...? Why—"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Then I will speak. As the Khan of the Dragons, allow me to introduce to you, the newest Tribe to the Demon Race."

The King of the Pale: "Wh-what are you saying! At such a critical moment!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "New Tribe?! I've never heard anything about this!"

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "You'd best explain yourself."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Of course. In that case, you'd best hear it from the horse's mouth."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Ah, uhhh, what's up. Wait, no. I mean. Good day to all of you, I am the East Fortress Base Commander. I am here to join the Kurultai as one of the Great Demon Tribes."

The Demon King: "Join...?"

The King of the Pale: "What are you talking about! The Kurultai has always been limited to the Eight Great Demon Tribes, it's the highest office of the entire world. How could a completely unknown Demon like yourself even hope to join us!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Uhh, actually, I'm a Human."

The King of the Pale slams the table.

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Human?!"

The Cyclops: "Human...!"

The King of the Pale: "What is this about, Fire Dragon Lord!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What are you talking about? Just what is a Demon anyway? Anything which lives in the Underground World can be called a Demon. This guy lives in the Underground World. Therefore, he's a Demon. It doesn't matter if he's also a Human."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What kind of lousy reasoning is that!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Just where is it written in *The Demon Annals* that Humans are not Demons?"

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "...! Ahahahaha!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "What purpose do you have at this Kurultai!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Right, I was gonna, I mean, I was about to get to that. I would like to be a Khan."

The King of the Pale: "A Human as a Khan?!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "That's right. I represent the Tribe of the Gate, with 48,000 Tribesmen, I make my request to join this Kurultai."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "..."

The Baron of Steel: “Wh-what...”

The Queen of Fairies: “...Forty eight thousand?”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “That's right. This Kurultai is a conference for the Demon King and other powerful Khans. It was never decided that it was just for us eight Tribes. Do you remember? The Automatons themselves only joined the Conference about six generations ago.”

The Baron of Steel: “We won that, right.”

The Cyclops: “That was... the result... of a war...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “There doesn't need to be a war. Any Tribe with more than 40,000 tribesmen is allowed to join the conference as long as he has the support of two other Khans.”

The Queen of Fairies: “Forty thousand...?”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “Don't be foolish, how can such a small race take part in the Kurultai?”

The King of the Pale: “That's right! What kind of authority does he carry with so few tribesmen?!”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “This is not something I have decided! It is clearly written as a stipulation in *The Demon Annals*. That's all!”

Aide-de-Camp: “Allow me to explain this clearly. Umm. The stipulations were all written quite a time back and in accordance to the demands of the period, right? So in other words, when this stipulation was created, forty thousand was a fairly large size for a Tribe.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “The times...”

The King of the Pale: “Who cares if it's a stipulation! Forty thousand? What kind of fool would agree to that! How can we acknowledge the power of such a tiny Tribe?!”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “But stipulations are stipulations, and stipulations are

absolute, aren't they?"

The King of the Pale: "—!!!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "How can you use some obscure stipulation to call this motion and then object to a different stipulation halfway through the conference. That's just unfair."

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "Ahahahahaha! Stipulations! Stipulations! Stipulations are important, aren't they, King of the Pale?"

The King of the Pale: "Agh! Agghhhh!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Who would support such a thing! A Tribe controlled by a Human!"

The King of the Pale: "That's right! Who would!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "I'm counting on you, old man."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I will stand behind him. I just need one more name..."

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "Ahahahahaha! This is funny, this is very funny. I will stand by him. I'm sure the Queen of Fairies would have done it anyway, but I will lend my support to this human."

Aide-de-Camp: "Here is the census for the entire 48,000 members of my Tribe. It also includes the resumes of the Self-Governing Council of the City of the Gate. With the addition of the official seals of the two Khans, all the necessary paperwork has been compiled."

The King of the Pale: "What if I object?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "There are no stipulations for objections. Once the paperwork has been filed, this guy here is the Khan of the Gate. He may join in the conference and has the right to speak and vote."

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "Hahahaha! What now?"

The Demon King: "!"

The King of the Pale: "...Don't tell me."

East Fortress Base Commander: "On the matter hitherto discussed, we, the Tribe of the Gate believe in peace and prosperity. We have many Humans residing in our City, and they have been working hand-in-hand with their Demon counterparts. Of course, there have been many inconveniences and disturbances. And many other things have happened too. But through it all, we can still stand strong next to each other, bar a few scuffles, eat from the same rice bowl, and bear the same weights together."

"Fiends, Fangs, Fairies, Dragons, Banshees, Demons of the Pale, not many, but Giants and Automatons too. There is only one rule in my City. Comrades for prosperity. I... No, we the Tribe of the Gate, vote to retain the present Demon King."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Right. Then we have half of all the votes."

The Hero: "Base Commander! Base Commander! You son of a gun! I had no idea!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Sorry, Hero... I mean, Black Knight. I had to change many horses just to get here. Two hours? I barely made it, let alone have time to stop by the Demon King's Pavilion."

The Demon King: "Just like that... I will never forget what you have done for me today... I am sorry for all the trouble I have caused you."

East Fortress Base Commander: "It's fine. You hunted down that damn Commander after all. Right, Demon King, I should be thankful towards you."

The Demon King: "No, no, let us be as normal."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hoho, what's this? That's a very pretty smile you've got there."

Aide-de-Camp: "Alright, so what's next?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "That's right. Shall we proceed with the rest of today's conference?"

The Witch-Queen of the Banshees: "Indeed, my Khans?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Heh! Enough! I'm leaving!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Alright. Let us call for a recess."

The King of the Pale: "Excuse my displeasure." *Spits.*

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Gahahahahaha!"

The Queen of Fairies: "How great! The Demon King is still the Demon King..."

— — — The Kurultai, in Front of the Grand Pavilion

East Fortress Base Commander: "Ahh, so I made it in time. I really had to rush. Demon King and Black Knight, you two had turned so blue, I was wondering what was going on."

The Hero: "Haha, I suppose so."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hahahahaha."

The Hero: "The Mage passed you *The Demon Annals?*"

Aide-de-Camp: "That's right. But it took us some time to read through the whole thing. That's why when we heard something was amiss, we rushed here as fast as we could."

The Demon King: "And you flew over here by horse..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "I'm glad that we could be of use. But that Fire Dragon Lord really did us a huge favour back there."

The Demon King: "I'll be sure to thank him later."

The Hero: "Yeah, he saved us."

The Demon King: "Of course he did, I'll make sure to do the necessary etiquette."

The Hero: "How rare it is for the Demon King to be so thankful."

The Demon King: "What are you saying? I'm a very thankful person."

The Chief Maid: "Well, well."

The Hero: "In any case, let's go back to the pavilion to rest."

East Fortress Base Commander: "My throat is dry and my stomach is empty."

Aide-de-Camp: "And we're really tired."

The Chief Maid: "I will prepare a pot of tea as soon as we return. Your Majesty, shall I use our best Roasted Red Tea in celebration?"

Arrows whistling!

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "We're under attack?! Where?!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Arrows! It's an ambush!"

Aide-de-Camp: "So many arrows! At this rate..."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty?! Your Majesty?!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Her Majesty is under attack! It's an ambush! Guards! Guards! What are you doing!!! Secure the perimeter!!!"

Royal Guard: "!!! Secure the perimeter!"

Royal Guard: "All personnel protect Her Majesty!"

The Demon King: "Ah... Hero..."

The Hero: "Demon King!"

The Chief Maid: "Blood! Demon King!"

The Hero: "Oi! Demon King!!! Demon King!!!"

Chapter 2, “The Kurultai without the Demon King”

— — — The Kurultai, the Pavilion of the Demon King

Slam!

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Has the Demon King really fallen!”

East Fortress Base Commander: “...”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Yeah.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “What is going on? Explain!”

Aide-de-Camp: “After the conference, we were walking back to the pavilion. It was a short distance, and we were laughing and joking... All of a sudden, someone fired an arrow at the completely defenceless Demon King...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Is the Demon King all right?!”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “She is presently in the care of my wife, we are trying to delay it.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Delay what?”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “She has been poisoned. We are trying to slow it down.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “The arrows penetrated her lung. It's definitely a very serious injury. Actually, it wouldn't have been strange if she had died on the spot. Luckily, the Black Knight managed to suck out some of the poison.”

Aide-de-Camp: “...”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “The shamans of the Tattooed and the physicians of the Banshees are tending to her as best we can, but it's a very deep wound and the poison is a very strong one as well...”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Why...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Who is responsible for this! To do something like this in a place like this. The Demon King is absolutely crucial for the Kurultai!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "To use such a method to deal with the Demon King, doing something so underhanded is far below what any normal Demon would do. The fool. I cannot understand why anyone would be so willing to anger the Eight Great Demon Tribes, no, the Nine Great Demon Tribes with such an underhanded method as assassination."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "How about a human..."

Aide-de-Camp: "What are you saying?!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Using such despicable means to attack the Demon King would result in a loss of reputation, so it can't be a warrior. It's clear that it can't be anyone from the Demon Race. None of the Khans would allow it... That's why it's natural for me to suspect that this must have been done by a human assassin."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...No, the only one who would stand to gain from this is one of us. The shooter was never even revealed, so there was no loss of reputation. It's probably someone who saw the Demon King as an obstacle to be removed."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Now we can only pray for the best..."

Wind blows...

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Black Knight."

The Hero: "...The next few days will be the most difficult."

East Fortress Base Commander: "!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Isn't there something we can provide? Ice? Medicine? I've already sent for the best physicians throughout the land."

The Hero: "...Thank you for all you have done. I cannot thank you any more for all the help you have provided for us. The Chief Maid is presently tending to her, but... It is very deep. — The necrosis is very advanced as well."

Aide-de-Camp: "That's..."

The Hero: "...If the Demon King falls, how will the next Demon King be selected?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I suppose that should be considered."

The Hero: "Please tell me."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...The stars will decide the successors of the Demon King. The successors will discover a sigil somewhere on their body. It is said that the bigger the sigil, the more suitable he is to be the successor to the Demon King. In fact, throughout History, the Demon Kings have always had an extremely deep sigil."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It often happens that a lot of people have the sigil. Usually about two or three. The present Demon King had an unprecedented number of sigil-bearers to contend with though..."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "There were six."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "If only one person has the sigil, that person automatically becomes the Demon King. If there are many, then a war of succession is fought. The Demon King candidate or a representative takes part in a tournament, and the victor of the tournament becomes the next Demon King."

The Hero: "I see..."

Walks away.

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Where are you going?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Oi!"

The Hero: "I go to fulfil the wish of the Demon King."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What?! Where?"

The Hero: "...Time does not stop for the Kurultai and the considerations of the ceasefire. While the Demon King is still alive, every second is as precious as a grain of gold."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Black Knight."

The Hero: "—"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "As the Khan of the Banshees, I will stay here. I am prepared for a heartbreaking conclusion to the Demon King, but a set of healing hands here is better used than at the Kurultai."

The Hero: "Thank you."

— — The Kurultai, the Avenue of Pavilions

Flap flap flap.

The Hero: "Demon Thrush."

Demon Thrush: "I am by your side."

The Hero: "The footprints?"

Demon Thrush: "I apologise, I could not follow them to their destination."

The Hero: "Whereabouts did it lead?"

Demon Thrush: "The hill to the northeast."

The Hero: "Let's go investigate it. Charm of Speed!" *Magic flows from fingers.*

Flap flap flap.

Demon Thrush: "Here it is."

The Hero: "...So the attack came from here?"

The Queen of Fairies: "Sir Black Knight."

The Hero: "Your Majesty..."

The Queen of Fairies: "The Fairies have completely sealed the city. We may not have much battlefield ability, but we do specialise in seals and monitoring and the like..."

The Hero: "That is good."

The Queen of Fairies: "How is the Demon King...?"

The Hero: "Critical."

The Queen of Fairies: "...!"

The Hero: "Continue to conduct surveillance. Report back to me if you find anything strange."

Demon Thrush: "My Lord."

The Hero: "What is it?"

Demon Thrush: "Having investigated the area, I have discovered some repetitive footprints. I believe the perpetrators were operating in a group of about ten people. The footprints appear to have been moving together."

The Queen of Fairies: "A group."

The Hero: "I have a lot of questions for these people."

The Queen of Fairies: "Indeed."

Demon Thrush: "My Lord, there is also a suspicious mark over here."

The Hero: "...What is it?"

The Queen of Fairies: "There's nothing here."

The Hero: "Is this... a battle?"

Demon Thrush: "I do not know."

The Queen of Fairies: "Even with the magical abilities of the Tribe of Fairies, I can only detect a faint hint of something having happened here..."

The Hero: "The Shadow Arrow... Is it Grandpa?"

— — — **The Kurultai, the Perimeter of the Venue**

Fairy: "Anything?"

Fairy: "Nope."

Fairy: "See anything?"

Fairy: "Nope."

Fairy: "But."

Fairy: "But."

Fairy: "Something is coming."

Fairy: "A unit, there's a unit."

Fairy: "Their breathing is very shallow."

Fairy: "They're hiding."

Fairy: "Got warn them!"

Fairy: "Warn the Queen!"

Fairy: "The Black Knight and the Demon King are in danger!"

Fairy: "Danger!"

Fairy: "Warn the Queen!"

Fairy: "Warn her!"

Fairy: "There's a unit hidden in the valley!"

----- **The Kurultai, the Pavilion of the Demons of the Pale**

King of the Pale: "The black flag has been raised."

Colonel of the Pale: "A black flag symbolises the death of a Khan—If it's coming from the Demon King's pavilion, then it must symbolise the death of the Demon King. It seems the Demon King is at the end of her lifeline."

King of the Pale: "Hmph. It's to be expected that such a weak Demon King would be so fragile. If she had only accepted my offer to abdicate, her life wouldn't be in such danger. Girls should never be allowed to fight in the first place."

Colonel of the Pale: "It is as you say."

Door opens.

General of the Pale: "Your Majesty."

King of the Pale: "Ohh, it's the pride of our Army. You have come at a good time. The Demon King is dead... I do not know who or why, but this is a great thing at a brilliant timing."

Colonel of the Pale: "You have come quickly."

King of the Pale: "Where is the Prince?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Father, I am here as well."

King of the Pale: "Ohhh! Are you well! My only son and successor!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hahahaha. I am, Father, thank you for your concern."

General of the Pale: "The sigil has made its appearance."

King of the Pale: "Where?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "My eyes are the very proof." *Closes eyes.*

General of the Pale: "This sigil on both his eyelids, it is clearly the sigil of the Demon King. With his strength and skill, he will surely be the material of legends."

Prime Minister of the Pale: "...He is truly a Prince of the Pale."

King of the Pale: "What a blessing! To think I would see this in my reign! My son, bearing the sigil, and the Demon King on her deathbed. The Demon Gods are just waiting to welcome a new addition from the Tribe of the Pale!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hahahahaha! I am willing to bear the responsibility for the Great Tribe of the Pale. — However, the mere title of Prince, is not very cool."

King of the Pale: "...What are you talking about?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "General, please."

General of the Pale: "For the Grace of Your Highness."

Prime Minister of the Pale: "..."

Stabs.

King of the Pale: "Wha! What?!"

General of the Pale: "For the prosperity of the Pale, rest in peace, Your Majesty."

King of the Pale: "Da—! Damn you?! I'm your father! You would kill me for my throne?! I won't allow..."

Stabs.

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hmm."

General of the Pale: "It is over, Sigil King."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Sigil King... It's not bad, but I'll wait for another nickname."

General of the Pale: "Indeed."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I will be the next Demon King. Hehehehehehehe. Hahahahahaha!"

----- The Kurultai, the Grand Pavilion

General of the Pale: "Well, I have gathered you for a simple reason. Due to unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances, the Demon King has passed away, and we are very sorry for this unprecedented turn of events. In order to free ourselves from this predicament, I would like to borrow the advice of the Khans. Before this, I would like to introduce you to somebody."

The Baron of Steel: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Who are you? Where is the King of the Pale?"

General of the Pale: "I beg your forgiveness. I am a General of the Army of the Pale. The Tribe of the Pale has welcomed a new Khan, it is my pleasure to introduce to you, the new Khan of the Pale."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "A new Khan?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "That would be me. I am the successor to the King of the Pale. My father passed away from a sudden sickness last night. I have been learning the ways of the King in order to succeed my father for a long time now, and I have the support of the Tribe of the Pale for the throne. — Now, I seek only your support."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "...Is that so? This reeks of blood."

The Cyclops: "The decision... of the Tribe..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph, fine."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It is not our practice to interfere with the domestic politics of the Tribes. If this is the decision of your people, we will accept it."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "So, you want to talk about what happens after the death of the Demon King?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I am sure my Khans all know about the unfortunate passing of the Demon King, this is to decide what we will do next."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What we decide has no bearing..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The next Demon King will be decided by the stars."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "However, there is a problem here. Regardless of our many entreatments, we are currently still at war with the Human World. The only person who has the authority to call a ceasefire or a truce or whatever has just passed away. We cannot waste time in deciding the next Demon King, this concerns the life and death of the Demon World."

The Hero: "..."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "That is true."

The Baron of Steel: "So what would you have us do?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Continue the Kurultai in the absence of the Demon King?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "If there is such a need."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Decide this matter between the nine of us?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I have one more thing to announce. The sigil has appeared on my eyes."

The Baron of Steel: "Eyes...?!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Don't tell me..."

The Queen of Fairies: "Even the fearsome Demon King known as the Demon Eye only had the sigil on his right eye..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hey, hey. What's this all about?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "That's right. I am in line to be the next Demon King. With the death of the Demon King, it is not uncommon for an uninterrupted succession. Based on the intelligence of the Tribe of the Pale, at this current juncture, there are no other claimants to the Throne."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What?!"

The Baron of Steel: "That cannot be..."

The Hero: "..."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "If you think about it, there were six claimants at the last generation."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hahahaha, perhaps that is why there are none this time."

The Cyclops: "So the Demon King... is decided..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "The Pale... What's this about the good of the Demon Race, he just wants the Throne... He just wants to keep up the momentum. With the death of the Demon King, the Pale automatically receives the Throne, then."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "That may be so, but you are currently just a claimant."

The Queen of Fairies: "Indeed. You are not the Demon King."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I understand that. As I am young, I merely seek to gain your approval, I will work hard, and I have no intention to take the seat of the Demon King."

The Baron of Steel: "Hmph."

The Cyclops: "Then... why..."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I merely wish to speak on a few matters with you, using my status as the Khan of the Pale and a Claimant to the Throne of the Demon King. The first is extremely urgent, and that is that I have no intention to immediately occupy the empty Throne of the Demon King."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Fine."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "The second is that we must proceed with haste with the funeral service of the previous Demon King. At the same time, we must also focus our efforts on discovering her murderer. We must decide on someone to be responsible for this."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph. You should have said that from the start."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "The Tribe of the Pale believes that this was committed by Humans."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Based on what!" *Slams table.*

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Naturally, at this point we have no evidence. We have also been searching for the perpetrator without discounting the possibility that it was committed by Demons. However, at the very least, it is clear that this is just a cowardly method to create divisions among the Tribes in the Demon World. We have to pursue this coward aggressively and catch him."

The Baron of Steel: "Humans..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Seems like something they would do!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Thirdly, how long shall we wait? As I said earlier, we are pressed for time. It is true that the stars may pick other Claimants and we should allow them time, however, the ones who decide when the date of the War of Succession will be are the Eight, now the Nine Great Khans. I beseech you to make an earlier decision."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Which is the next Tribe making the decision?"

The Queen of Fairies: "We were the last one."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "In that case, it is us, the Fiends."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Please make a decision."

The Baron of Steel: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: “...”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “What will it be?”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “...”

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: “My Khan, please.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “...I understand that we are in a time of crisis. If we drag this on for too long, the Demon World may be thrown into chaos. We need a new Demon King right now, but we also need time for the other Claimants. This is a difficult question... However, wasting too much time is also a big problem. Tomorrow morning. That's right—Tomorrow morning, we will have the War of Succession. The other claimants have until daybreak to present their sigils, in the absence of which, the Tribe of the Pale will inherit the Throne.”

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: “...Black Knight.”

The Hero: “...What?”

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: “You are the left hand of the Demon King. Behind that black carapace, there are those who call you the Sword of the Demon King.”

The Hero: “...”

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: “I deeply regret the passing of the Demon King, however, you are the Demon World's strongest knight. In other words, you are our last bulwark against the incursions of the Human Race. Put aside your emotions and work together with me to support the Demon World.”

General of the Pale: “You have my highest honour, Sir Black Knight! Together, we can give the Demon World its strongest and most formidable army!
Hahahahahahaha!”

The Cyclops: “...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “How brash.”

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: “I apologise for any insult I have made, my Lord...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The fires of war... have reignited."

The Queen of Fairies: "Looks like we will be at war again."

— — — **The Kurultai, the next Morning**

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Daybreak."

The Cyclops: "Mor...ning..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph."

The Queen of Fairies: "Nobody has come."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "I see."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "You're going to have to take off that armour soon."

Aide-de-Camp: "Yeah."

The Hero: "But the Demon King gave it to me."

General of the Pale: "Today is a beautiful day."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "A day of rebirth."

The Baron of Steel: "...It is time."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Then it is settled. The Pale will provide the next Demon King. Step forward."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale steps forward.

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "As the Chieftain of the Tattooed, I represent the will of the Nine Great Khans at this Kurultai to acknowledge the sole claimant to the Throne of the Demon King. Do you object to bearing the name of the Demon King, the responsibilities of the Demon King Castle, and the duty to undergo four days of cleansing in the Palace of Death, in order to awaken as the next Demon King?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I do not."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Do you agree to carry on the will of the Demon King in your actions and your bearings?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I do."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Then, I hereby crown you the..."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hold."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "What?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Would it be possible to allow my right hand, and the unifier of the Demon World, the Black Knight to perform this ceremony?"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Fine. In that case, you now have the duty to place the circlet of the Demon King on the head of the Demon King. You will have the honour to serve him with honour and distinguished conduct."

The Hero: "..."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Black Knight. Step forward. Place the Circlet on the head of the Demon King."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Black Knight..."

Aide-de-Camp: "Black Knight..."

The Queen of Fairies: "Black Knight..."

The Hero: "..."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "My right hand. My Grand Marshall. I hereby bestow upon you the greatest honour I can bestow in the Demon World, in recognition of your many victories without defeats, I proclaim you the Black Marshal of Death. As the right hand of my reign, we will together usher in an age of prosperity. I thank you for your unwavering service to the previous Demon King. Raise your sword, and receive my orders, now and forever."

The Hero: "I accept your orders. Under divine contract, my body and my life, everything belongs to the Demon King in entirety. My sword is exclusively for the enemies of the Demon King."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "...Everything?"

The Hero: "My strength is the strength of the Demon King, for the people of the Demon World. My skills are a ray of light, carving a road for the will of the Demon King. My voice will echo the commands of the Demon King. To realise the will of the Demon King, I will walk alongside the Demon King, on any path his Majesty chooses to take. My hands serve only the Demon King. — With these words, I pronounce my divine contract that binds me forever to the Demon King."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Black Knight!"

General of the Pale: "All hail the Demon King!"

Waaaaaaaa! All hail the Demon King!

General of the Pale: "Glory to the Demon King!"

Attendant: "Glory to the Demon King of the Pale!"

Prime Minister of the Pale: "Hehehehe. Glory! Glory!"

—Hmph, it's all just for show, isn't it.

Arrow flies through the air.

Prime Minister/Assassin: "Hiss... Wha... My leg, my leg... Hiss..."

Butler: "Be quiet. It's improper."

Prime Minister/Assassin: "Ah! Hiss! What are you doing! Grandpa! Hiss!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Who is it!"

General of the Pale: "What are you doing to our Minister!"

Butler: "Silence! Who would interrupt a ceremony like this! Even my young man has more class."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Ah... I've seen this person, on the battlefield, a long time ago."

The Hero: "Old man, you're late!"

Butler: "Nyohohohoho. Sorry for making you wait."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What is going on?"

Butler: "Nyohohohoho. I've been waiting for a while to confirm it, but I finally have my chance... in this guy's breast pocket."

Bottle rolls out.

Prime Minister/Assassin: "That's! No! Not that!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "A bottle...?!"

Butler: "This is the poison... Because of this thing, five of my cutest underlings are dead. It's a very scary poison. Without the antidote, it's a sure death."

The Baron of Steel: "Poison... Don't tell me..."

The Cyclops: "He's the assassin...?"

General of the Pale: "—!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hey, why is the same poison used to assassinate the Demon King with the Tribe of the Pale? Eh?"

Prime Minister/Assassin: "Let me go! Let me go!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Let's interrogate the assassin and find out why..."

Prime Minister/Assassin: "Damn you! Take this kick!" *Kicks.*

Slash.

Prime Minister/Assassin: "Agh! Ah, ah... Hiss... Hiss... Hiss..."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "That was dangerous, old man."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Hey! What's going on! Were you trying to silence him! Is that how you Pale things operate?!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hmph, I was just trying to save that old man."

General of the Pale: "Hahahahaha."

East Fortress Base Commander: "What a terrible excuse!"

Aide-de-Camp: "That was an extremely suspicious thing to have done!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "King of the Pale! You yourself said that it was highly imperative to find out what happened to the Demon King, and now you kill the only person who can tell us?! Explain yourself?!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "That's right, you'd better make this clear!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "..."

Clunk.

The Baron of Steel: "What's this... A mask...?"

The Cyclops: "That's..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "This assassin... Is from the Tribe of Serpents..."

Aide-de-Camp: "Tribe of Serpents...?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "From... From the Tribe of Beasts...? No! That can't be! It's true that we support the war, but we wouldn't do something as underhanded as

assassination! That can't be!"

General of the Pale: "Who would believe you?"

The Baron of Steel: "This looks even worse for you Demons of the Pale!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "The suspicion is on the people who would hire this assassin as a Prime Minister!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I think you're misunderstanding something."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "What?!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Excuses? Suspicions? Hahahaha."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "I'm the Demon King, right? I don't need things like excuses. I have no need to clarify any suspicions. What I say is right. I am the Demon King. There are none above me. I rule the Demon World. So, I don't want to hear any more of this crap."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "You are at the Kurultai! The Demon King needs the support of half the Tribes to keep the Throne!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "In that case, I officially call an end to the Kurultai. Convening a Kurultai is the personal privilege of the Demon King."

The Baron of Steel: "!"

The Queen of Fairies: "What?"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Let me make this clear, I will not convene a second Kurultai. I have no need for the support of anyone else, unlike that third-rate, weak-willed Demon King. You can call me a tyrant or whatever, I don't care. I am different from that rotten woman. I am the order of the Demon World, I am beyond all law. Do you understand! It's over... It's the end. My Khans."

"Perhaps you should change that way of thinking."

General of the Pale: "Who is it?"

The Demon King: "Do I really need to introduce myself..."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty, don't push it."

The Female Paladin: "The healing process isn't complete yet, let's go back."

The Demon King: "I have to do this."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Demon... King..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Demon King!"

The Queen of Fairies: "Demon King!"

General of the Pale: "What?! Why are you here!"

The Demon King: "I will say this just once. Even though I'm saying this in the capacity of the Demon King, to begin with this entire system of the Demon King is completely anachronistic. To have all power vested with a single person; that authority, and might, and influence that person now holds, will completely imbalance and prejudice the other Tribes, just as it has done for the many Kings before and just as it is doing now. You get it, right? You may speak of loyalty and deference, but when a power-crazy Demon King rises to the throne, you get this kind of despicable and heinous acts occurring in the World."

Butler: "Scholar..."

The Demon King: "I apologise for suspecting you."

Butler: "Well, you believed me in the end."

The Demon King: "It's because of what the Hero said. 'That old man would never kill anyone D-cup and above.' Furthermore, using poison isn't really your style, is it?"

Butler: "I'm a real gentleman after all, nyohohohohoho."

The Hero: "—So, I suppose your candidature was invalid to begin with. My sword belongs to the Demon King, that is explicitly what was stated in the contract."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Black Knight, damn you!"

The Demon King: "Hero!"

The Hero: "Got it!"

The Demon King: "Seize the Sigiled Prince! If possible, I want him alive. But use whatever means you have to!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "This isn't over yet!"

Magic buzzes in the air.

The Hero: "?!"

The Female Paladin: "What's with this insane Demonic Energy?!"

The Chief Maid: "That's the magic of the Palace of Death?!"

Explosion.

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hahahahahaha! Black Knight! Black Knight! Black Knight!!! This is the real strength of the Demon World! Ahahahahaha!!!"

The Hero: "This guy is insane!!!"

Draws sword, magic buzzes.

The Hero: "Charm of Haste! Blade of Lightning! Spell of Armour!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Lightfoot Activate! Curse of Demon Armour! Hex of the Phoenix!"

Explosion.

East Fortress Base Commander: "What is up with these guys!"

Aide-de-Camp: "I'm just seeing a lot of bright lights?!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Now! I will destroy you, Black Knight! I am the Demon King! I will root out weakness! The weak one is especially weakened by

poison, so anyone at all can kill her!"

The Hero: "What! That's underhanded!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Die, you fool!"

Blast of magic.

The Hero: "Crap. Going by magical energy alone... This guy is Demon King-class!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Go! Take down that woman!!!"

Soldiers of the Pale: "Understood! Attack! Attack!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Horsemen?! Aide-de-Camp!"

Aide-de-Camp: "Yes!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "Assemble the Khans, form a perimeter and protect the Demon King!"

The Baron of Steel: "Demon of the Pale! Where did all these soldiers come from?!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Ohhhhh! This is too much!" *Draws saber.*

The Hero: "Demon Thrush, protect the Demon King!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Damn bird! Get out of the way!"

Swords clashing.

The Cyclops: "Ughh... Protect... the Demon King..."

The Demon King: "This body is too..."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty!"

The Female Paladin: "Don't come any closer! I'll kill you!"

General of the Pale: "Archers! Move up!"

Archers of the Pale move up.

East Fortress Base Commander: “There's too many of them!”

The Chief Maid: “?!”

General of the Pale: “Move closer! Blot out the sun with arrows! All at one go!
On my mark!”

Arrows fly through the air.

Archer of the Pale: “Eh?”

Bonk.

Archer of the Pale: “What was that?”

Bonk.

Archer of the Pale: “Hey, you... Pick up your bow.”

Bonk.

Archer of the Pale: “Your head! Where's your head?!”

Bonk.

Archer of the Pale: “Where?! Where is it coming from?!”

Bonk.

Archer of the Pale: “I can't see! My eyes! My eyes!”

Bonk.

Archer of the Pale: “Ahhhhhhhhh!”

Bonk.

Butler: “Hmm, second-rate soldiers. That's all it took. Anyone who dares to point his bow at the Demon King is my enemy.”

East Fortress Base Commander: "Just who is that old man, what did he do?"

The Female Paladin: "He shot them."

East Fortress Base Commander: "But he's not carrying anything!"

The Female Paladin: "I've never actually seen him carry anything actually."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Don't tell me, he's the legendary Archer?!"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah he is, but I've never actually seen him with a bow."

East Fortress Base Commander: "What is the Archer doing here!"

The Female Paladin: "They died from his Phantom Arrows."

The Hero: "Take this! Lightning Destruction Spell Class One!"

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hah! Wall of Ice!"

Explosion, ice shattering.

Cavalryman of the Pale: "Now! Attack the Demon King!"

Cavalryman of the Pale: "Restore the Pale to the throne!"

Horses charging.

The Female Paladin: "! This is bad. She hasn't recovered from the poison yet, she's already at her limit. And there are so many of them..."

The Chief Maid: "I will go."

The Demon King: "No... You can't..."

Cavalryman of the Pale: "Take this! Attack the Demon King!"

Horses charging.

The Fire Dragon Lord: "You damn fools! Shut up!" *Roars.*

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "Hah! Hah... I never expected you would be this good."

The Hero: "Hah... Hah... That's my line. And I thought you were just a candidate."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "But it ends here. Take this! I will gather all my Demonic Energy! For this final, ultra-killing move. Mass Destruction, Complete Annihilation Spell!!!"

The Chief Maid: "?!"

The Hero: "! You won't make it! I'll disrupt you first! Mass Destruction, Lightning Obliteration Spell!"

Air crackles with magical energy, explosions all around.

East Fortress Base Commander: "Even the air is burning?!"

The Demon King: "Hero!"

General of the Pale: "Your Highness!"

Explosion.

The Hero: "...Hahh."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "...Hah. Hah. Hah."

Butler: "Hero, at this rate, the Scholar!"

General of the Pale: "Your Highness, no more."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "...Sound the retreat! Retreat!"

The Hero: "..."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "...I still have my life."

The Hero: "The Demon King was protected, this is my victory."

Sigiled Prince of the Pale: "We now enter a new era of warfare. Take pride

because it will not last long. Soon, the curtains of hell will draw open and you will see! Hahahahahaha!"

— — — **The City of the Gate, the Temple of the Lunar Willow**

Disciple Engineer: "What is it, we've arrived too early."

Disciple Bard: "We're here to pay our respects."

Disciple Engineer: "A temple? I never knew you were so pious."

Disciple Bard: "I'm not really very pious. But since this is the God of Music, I thought we should stop by."

Disciple Engineer: "Is that so?"

Disciple Bard: "The City of the Gate is a Holy Land for a large variety of gods."

Disciple Engineer: "I see."

Disciple Bard: "It is said that those who hope to do commerce in the City should pray here, to avoid misfortune. It's not like we lose anything just by paying our respects."

Disciple Engineer: "That's true."

Disciple Bard: "Let's go then."

Disciple Engineer: "There sure are a lot of Gods."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah, the hills around the city are just carpeted with Temples."

Disciple Engineer: "It's really quite amazing."

Disciple Bard: "Though the biggest ones are the God of the Ancients, the Lightning God, the God of Light, and the God of Darkness—"

Disciple Engineer: "And the God of Music?"

Disciple Bard: "Tada! Here he is!"

Disciple Engineer: "...That's not a temple, that's just a shrine."

Disciple Bard: "They're roughly the same thing."

Disciple Engineer: "Their construction and scale are completely different."

Disciple Bard: "All that matters is the faith of the believer."

Disciple Engineer: "You yourself just said you weren't very faithful."

Disciple Bard: "Right then, you should clean it up a bit."

Disciple Engineer: "What are you going to do?"

Disciple Bard: "I'm going to play a verse."

Disciple Engineer: "While I do all the manual labour?"

Disciple Bard: "That's right. ♪"

Disciple Engineer: "Well, I guess it's fine."

~♪ ~♪

Disciple Engineer: "That being said, you really went straight into this music thing even though you were pretty good at a whole lot of things when we were still students."

~♪ ~♪

Disciple Engineer: "I suppose it's all relative. I'm really into engineering after all."

~♪ ~♪

Disciple Engineer: "Heh. She's all caught up in it."

— — — **The City of the Gate, in front of the Temple of the Lunar Willow**

~♪ ~♪

Disciple Engineer: "You're still at it."

Disciple Engineer: (If you thought about it... This temple is really something. The City is completely enveloped by two rivers and nine hills, and on these hills, there are temples.)

Disciple Engineer: "There must have been a pretty ingenious architect to design this."

Disciple Engineer: (Especially the temples. Temples have such gorgeous Parapets, I'm really envious of a person who could design such a nice parapet...)

Disciple Engineer: "Umm, eh? Wait. There seems to be some paper... Oh, it's the floor."

Disciple Engineer: (These parapets are almost like the routes between towers. Rather than a Temple, this place more resembles a fortress. I didn't think of it that way at first because it was so beautiful. It has ambush and choke points, along with clear fortified supply routes. Perhaps this was a sort of open-concept fortification line? No, rather than an open-concept... Perhaps in the past, they were all linked up to form a massive fortification?)

Disciple Engineer: "Just how old are these temples anyway? They look very resilient..."

Disciple Engineer: (...Hmm, now that I think about it, even the two rivers could have been some kind of ancient beachhead... To begin with, when we were crossing them on our boat, I always felt that the banks were piled too high to be natural. Perhaps, it was some kind of Dike?)

Disciple Engineer: "Perhaps what used to be a brick and stone fortification was covered up by eons of mud and earth, and life sprung on top of it, leaving it looking like this. It's possible. It's possible... I've always felt that the City needed some change, but perhaps this is what it was originally supposed to be like..."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hmm."

Disciple Engineer: "If we did this—"

Draws on dust.

Disciple Engineer: "This is the North, so this is where the current main road is, it wouldn't be strange to think that it led to that mountain there, I suppose. No, it's more likely that the lifeline was to the South. That would make it for more coherent with everything else. In other words, the original main gate of the City is the South Gate."

Middle Aged Merchant: "It's there."

Disciple Engineer: "Eh?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "There's an old road in that direction."

Disciple Engineer: "Really?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yes, though it stops halfway in the mountains. It splits off from the new road which leads to the Gate."

Disciple Engineer: "How wide is it? And what of the construction?!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "I'm not sure about the construction, but I would say it is about three times wider than a person. As far as I can tell, it's stone paved."



Parapet: The protruding part of a castle or another construction. From these parapets, arrows could be fired at the enemy without exposing one's body. They were hence originally made for defensive purposes.

Dike: A sort of defensive wall consisting of earth which is piled high to stop water from flowing through as a sort of ready-made moat.

Disciple Engineer: "Stone-paved..."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Are you interested in this?"

Disciple Engineer: "I really want to see it! An old road. It's cut off halfway? Perhaps that is due to some sort of natural disaster. It would make sense that there was some kind of natural disaster which buried the old roads and hence new roads had to be conducted. That would probably explain why the new roads diverged from the old roads as well."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Mmhmm."

Disciple Engineer: "Sorry, here I am gabbling on to a complete stranger."

Middle Aged Merchant: "No, no, it was a very interesting conversation."

Disciple Engineer: "I am the Young Disciple. As you can see from my horns, I am a member of the Banshee Tribe."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I am the Middle Aged Merchant. I'm a traveling merchant in the City of the Gate."

Disciple Engineer: "A travelling merchant. You must know the roads very well."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Well, I suppose I have been here and there."

Disciple Engineer: "You must have a very deep passion for your work."

Middle Aged Merchant: "...You are passionate about roads?"

Disciple Engineer: "Well, I am a civil engineer."

Middle Aged Merchant: "A civil engineer?"

Disciple Engineer: "Not many know the term. I build roads and dams, fortifications, and castles, I also do projects like bringing water to crops for irrigation purposes or for growing trees and forests. I've even changed the shape of mountains to protect against natural disasters. Of course, these aren't completely done by myself alone but they are rather large-scale projects."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Roads too?"

Disciple Engineer: "Roads too. You may have heard of wild roads, which are roads which naturally remain easy to walk on even after they have been neglected for a very long time. It is said that roads form where people walk. It's really because the grass and plants are trampled and never have the opportunity to grow, while the ground becomes hard and compacted, making it easy to walk on. However, if you plan ahead and build well, the roads are even better and can be used for more purposes."

Middle Aged Merchant: "What about bridges?"

Disciple Engineer: "Yeah, bridges are very important too! Bridgeworks enable people and goods to cross valleys, rivers, and other otherwise unpassable areas. There are bridges on land to cross uneven terrain and bridges over water too. Most are made from wood, but stone is really the most resilient material to construct a bridge from."

Wait, actually, at this time... Or even in the time before us, there were bridges made of metal as well right? Even if you just made the ropes out of metal, you would be able to support a great deal of weight."

Paces around.

Middle Aged Merchant: "Umm, excuse me."

Disciple Engineer: "In other words, there are extreme advantages to be afforded from a strength perspective..."

Paces around.

Middle Aged Merchant: "Excuse me?!"

Disciple Engineer: "Ah—sorry! I got too carried away, I was talking as if I was in a dream."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Well, if you're into road and bridge building, I do have a contract that needs fulfilling."

Disciple Engineer: "A contract?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yeah, there's a place which needs a bridge."

Disciple Engineer: "Really?! What kind?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Well... I haven't really seen it myself but it seems they need a bridge between a place where the sky and earth are reversed."

----- **The Kurultai, that Night**

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "So, how exactly is Her Majesty?"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "I am concerned about that too."

The Hero: "She will live, she must be left alone to recuperate for these two weeks. For the next few months after, movement will also be inconvenient for her."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "I see..."

The Baron of Steel: "And what of the Pale?"

The Queen of Fairies: "The Pale have quite a large number of troops in the area. As soon as they join back with them, they will probably head back to their lands."

East Fortress Base Commander: "So it's war."

The Baron of Steel: "It's clear that the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale have betrayed us."

The Cyclops: "Betrayal... is bad..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The time to decide this is now."

The Hero: "The Demon King is currently on her sickbed. We should wait a while before making a decision. After all, this whole thing is the result of the Tribe of the Pale going off and making their own decisions and stratgems."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I agree as well."

The Hero: "Furthermore, we cannot ascertain whether or not their retreat might have some kind of hidden ambush strategy behind it."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "We have also yet to completely examine the business of the Assassin."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Please believe me, the Tribe of the Fang had nothing to do with it!"

The Baron of Steel: "To think you would still say such things at this time! It was a member of the Tribe of the Fang who pointed that arrow at the Demon King!"

(This Merchant definitely met with the Tribe of the Pale... Hmm, he had a subordinate behind him... And to his side, there was someone wearing a thin hood... He had a very... strange breathing sound...)

(It was wet... Like a snake's...)

East Fortress Base Commander: "No, there might just be something else about this."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What do you mean?"

East Fortress Base Commander: "I have been receiving reports of a suspicious guy who breathes like a snake."

Aide-de-Camp: "We were never able to arrest him, though."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Was that the Assassin? But this is no proof that he is unrelated to the Silver Tiger Lord or the Tribe of the Fang. Even if we discount the intentions of the Silver Tiger Lord, it is clear that at least one member of the Tribe of the Fang has betrayed us."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "I am the one who was betrayed, please believe me!"

East Fortress Base Commander: "My investigation squads began their search four months ago. At the time, we thought he was human. After all, the human merchants would definitely have some sort of motive."

Aide-de-Camp: "Sir... I don't think it's a very good idea to draw so many

suspicions to us humans. It might fan prejudices."

East Fortress Base Commander: "It's fine. It's better to tell the whole truth. After all, we have just joined. It would be wrong not to share what we know."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "...A human?"

The Hero: "Well... Alright. I've had enough with this helmet."

Clunk.

The Silver Tiger Lord: "You're a human!"

The Hero: "Yeah, I'm a Human. Even today, I don't completely reside in the Demon World. To borrow the words of the Fire Dragon Lord, I am a Half-Demon."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmm. Hahaha! I see... That hair, those eyes. That's right! That's right! Hahahahahahaha! That explains your power! And your courage! That's why!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Why is a Human wearing the Armour of the Demon King?"

The Hero: "In the Human World, there are those who call me 'the Hero.'"

East Fortress Base Commander: "...And I thought you wanted to keep it hidden."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "What!? The Hero?!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The mortal enemy of the Demons! The World's strongest Human!"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hahahahaha! I see now! That would explain the strength and the magical ability!"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "...And yet I clearly recall the words of contempt the Demon King had for you in that battle."

The Baron of Steel: "You, the Warrior of a Million Blades, single-handedly slaughtered thousands of my Metal Brethren."

The Hero: "Yes... I'm sorry. That was war. I won't put it nicely. It is natural for most Demons to despise me. I killed many of them after all."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "And I was beginning to wonder just what kind of Demon, with such skill and dexterity, was hiding behind that Armour..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmph. Hmph. How interesting."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "And just why is the Hero wearing the Black Armour of the Demon King? That Armour was once worn by older generations of Demon Kings. It is a treasure of the Demon World, not to be worn without the express permission of the Demon King."

The Hero: "I was told to wear it by the Demon King."

The Queen of Fairies: "By the Demon King...?"

The Hero: "—Three years ago, I charged into the Demon King's Castle on my own, attempting to assassinate the Demon King. We were still at bitter war with the Demons, and at the time I believed that the Humans had been cruelly invaded by Demonkind, who were trying to pillage and slaughter us for evil."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "That is wrong, the ones who attacked were the Humans."

The Hero: "I know that now. However, that was a war. War puts all sorts of ideas in your head, as well as misunderstandings and misconceptions. In any case, that was the going propaganda in the Human World, and to me, the reason why this was happening was inconsequential. Demons were killing Humans, that was enough for me."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "..."

The Hero: "In any case, I charged into the Demon King's Castle. I found it strange but I never even saw the shadows of the Demon Guards and soldiers I had expected to be guarding the place. Without any backup, all on my own, I advanced into the Demon King Castle. And there, I met the Demon King."

The Baron of Steel: “The Demon King...”

The Hero: “The Demon King had come to receive me all on her own, even though she knew I was here to kill her. As you know, she's weak. I understood that as soon as I met her. Yeah, she was far weaker than any of the Demons I had previously encountered. However, she was waiting for me all on her own, ready to receive my attack.”

“We fought bitterly — but not with swords. Rather, with words and ideas, she wagered everything against me. Even now, I still do not really understand. Had I killed her there and then, what would have happened to the Demon World? What would have happened to the Human World?”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “What do you mean...?”

The Hero: “The Demon King told me that the survival of the two worlds depended on each other. We hated each other and were at war with each other but we needed each other too.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “...”

The Hero: “The Human World suffers from epidemics and famine... From here, all you can see are the metal and salt in the Human World, but to the Humans who live there, those are not important. There is always a lack of food and people die from starvation and malnutrition. I'm sorry to put it so bluntly, but it is likely that this was the reason for the war with the Demon World.”

Aide-de-Camp: “I suppose you could put it that way...”

The Hero: “On one hand, the Demon World is a blood stained chaotic world. However, if you looked at it simply, you would see rich and fertile land. Is that not the main reason for the chaos? If just for putting an end to this infighting and anarchy, it could be seen that the war with the Humans has its uses.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “...”

The Hero: “The Demon King hated that, even though it was logical. Because it was a warped logic. And because she was a very logical person.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “That's...”

The Hero: "However, I fear that the logic was wrong. The Demon King hated it, and for good reason, because this sort of unsustainable logic is just unfeasible. That's why she set out to solve it at its root cause. Demons—Well, not just Demons, Humans are guilty of this too, but shouldn't we have something stronger to believe in than the value of the mere incidence of our birth? She wanted to believe that was true."

The Hero: "And that's where I, as a Human, came in. She said she wanted to stop that, that she wanted to see a different future."

Aide-de-Camp: "I... see..."

The Hero: "I am the Hero. That is what they call me. I was supposed to be the saviour of Humankind. But operating solely on that principle, attacking the Demon World the way I did, I was just a murderer. But the Demon King is different. The Demon King has sincerely thought this through. She has considered the true methods by which to save the Demon World. The real hero is... the Demon King."

The Queen of Fairies: "To think... the Demon King was that sort of person..."

East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

Aide-de-Camp: "..."

The Hero: "As I'm sure you have noticed, we have been at war constantly, right? How should I say it, this state is completely unnatural. It's twisted. It'll never get us anywhere. That's what I think she's been trying to explain to me. The truth is that she's way too smart, and most of the time I only understand about half of what she tells me. The 'peace' and 'prosperity' she has in mind are definitely not as simple as a playground without conflicts... It's just that war accomplishes little but the slow attrition of our future."

The Demon King: "Ehhhh, what unnecessary things have you been saying in my absence?"

The Chief Maid: "..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Your Majesty."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Your Majesty."

The Demon King: "I couldn't really fall asleep..."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty."

The Baron of Steel: "How are you feeling!"

The Demon King: "As you can see... I'm definitely not one for combat. Go on, laugh at me."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "No, Your Majesty."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "I do not believe anybody wants to laugh at you."

The Demon King: "I am sorry... I am weak and that is limiting what I can do. That's why we're in this state. The Hero has been trying to convey my intentions but it's best that you forget about what he said."

The Hero: "...Demon King, but I just said a lot of good things!"

The Demon King: "It was a good try. However, the Demon World and its traditions are as old as time. These Khans bear the responsibilities of their Tribes on their shoulders, and the many Khans bear the weight of the entire Demon World. I want to give all my powers as the Demon King to the consensus of the Conference."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Wh...What?!"

The Demon King: "It is as I said."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Yes."

The Demon King: "I will rely on the Khans."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I understand."

The Demon King: "Queen of Fairies."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes."

The Demon King: "I want you to consider the opinions of the other minor Tribes apart from the Nine Great Tribes."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes."

The Demon King: "I will give you the Black Knight to help you with this task."

The Hero: "...Got it."

The Demon King: "For important things, as long as you have the majority vote, that should be enough. I would prefer if we did not hesitate about these sorts of things."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Understood."

The Demon King: "I should return in two to three months' time."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Demon King! Demon King!"

The Demon King: "Yes?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The Tribe of the Fang really had nothing to do with this! I have never considered the use of such despicable matters as assassination. This is a misunderstanding! I will take responsibility. However, do not allow the name of my Tribe to be stained. I, the Silver Tiger of the Snow Mountains, offer you my head in recompense."

Plants sword.

The Demon King: "Silver Tiger Lord, raise your head."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty, you have not recovered yet."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Your Majesty, please! Please, cut it off! We, the Tribe of the Fang are a warrior people. We are a proud people. We do not care for dishonourable and despicable things like assassination, especially not on our comrades, we strive only for victory. Rather than allow my people to face this humiliation, I am willing to die. I offer you my life, only allow my Tribe, my people, to hold their head up high!"

The Demon King: "Silver Tiger Lord. I have never suspected you nor the Tribe of the Fang."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "!"

The Demon King: "More importantly, I must apologise for something to all of you. I used you in my scheme when I faked my own death. It was incorrect of me to use involve the honourable and proud Khans in my petty trickery. — I am sorry."

"I had no way of knowing who the perpetrator was, or who his sponsor was. And had the perpetrator known I was still alive, he might have come for me again. I had no way of making sure. I had to gamble it all on this. Without the help of the Khans, I would surely not be alive today... I should have trusted my Khans more, and it is all because I did not that we are in this situation. I had hoped to do everything on my own, I was too proud... I am sorry."

The Baron of Steel: "No, it was a masterful strategy."

The Cyclops: "You are... no longer... a small person..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "We await only your return."

East Fortress Base Commander: "Leave it to us, and go and rest!"

The Queen of Fairies: "If anything happens, I will be sure to inform you."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Your Majesty. Your Majesty... I have awakened. My Tribe and I owe you a great debt. Until we have saved your life three times on the battlefield, I will consider this debt forever unpaid. The Tribe of the Fang, hereby pledge our lives as the shields of the Demon King."

The Demon King: "Thank... you." *Slumps over.*

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty!"

The Baron of Steel: "She's at her limit, get her to her chambers."

The Chief Maid: "Yes."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "She's really been through a lot."

Demon King is carried away.

East Fortress Base Commander: "Aide-de-Camp, write a missive. You are to return to the City of the Gate and report all of these to the Self-Governing Council."

Aide-de-Camp: "Got it!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "And now... we will have a Kurultai without the Demon King."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "That leaves one big question unanswered. How are we to defend this land and its people? It is just as the Demon King said. It is not yet the season for us to relinquish our responsibilities. Even though I'm already at this age, I have much to teach my children."

"...That being said, the Demon King and the Hero. In the thousands of years of the history of the Demon World, I have yet to hear of anything like this. Hahahaha. I see. Well then, Hero, Demon King, I suppose I haven't seen everything just yet."

— — — The Kurultai, on the Roof of the Pavilions

Teleporting flash.

Butler: "So that's how it is."

The Hero: "Did you hear?"

Butler: "Well, you specifically asked me to listen."

The Hero: "If I hadn't told you to listen in, you probably wouldn't have known how important it was."

Butler: "Nyohohohohoho."

The Hero: "Sigh—"

Butler: "What is it?"

The Hero: "I really am a traitor to the Human World, aren't I?"

Butler: "Well..."

The Hero: "I'm probably wanted for treason! Hahahaha."

Butler: "Probably."

The Hero: "To make matters worse, I'm an outsider even to the Demon Race, right?"

Butler: "Yep."

The Hero: "It's only because I'm currently the Demon King's personal sword, the Black Knight, that I've managed to escape from everything, otherwise I would have been done for, right? For the Demon King, I've just become her personal murderer, right?!"

Butler: "Why don't you just run away, then?"

The Hero: "That's not the problem here."

Butler: "Hmm."

The Hero: "Besides, if I did that, it would feel like everything has been a waste."

Butler: "That can't be helped."

The Hero: "I'm not getting any younger!"

Butler: "I'm the one who should be thinking that way."

The Hero: "Haven't you been surrounding yourself with girls?!"

Butler: "That would not be me."

The Hero: "You're taking this womanizing thing too far."

Butler: "I don't want to hear that from you!"

The Hero: "Well..."

Butler: "You're really depressed, aren't you?"

The Hero: "Well..."

Butler: "Why?"

The Hero: "..."

Butler: "..."

The Hero: "Well, I suppose I don't dislike this."

Butler: "Indeed."

The Hero: "I'm an ally of the Demons. To be honest, I wouldn't complain even if you killed me right here."

Butler: "Is that what you want?"

The Hero: "No, not really. I want to save everyone, the world."

Butler: "Isn't this good, then?"

The Hero: "Eh?"

Butler: "Being the Hero. Being the Hero who works in the Demon World to save the Human World? Actually, if you thought about it, the Gate is already gone. The Demon World is just underground, so since the beginning, there were never two worlds, right? There's only one world, so you might as well just call it the World... Hero. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the Hero's job is to save the world, right?"

The Hero: "—Yeah. That's true."

Butler: "Then, no matter how much you don't like it, you can't lose heart. It's fine. It's clear that we are but a small existence, that rather than being a

nuisance and a problem to society, it's more likely that we are just blind and dumb. Sometimes, I ask myself exactly what I do aside from hurting people because it is clear I'm not doing something as stupidly noble as saving people. But I'm sure that one day, someone, will eventually understand."

The Hero: "Old man..."

Butler: "But, isn't life a great thing?"

The Hero: "What are you talking about?"

Butler: "The thing?"

The Hero: "Eh?"

Butler: "The thing, that bouncy-bouncy thing with mass. That elliptical shape which provokes the frantic racing of the heart?! The stubborn, panic-inducing, squishy boobies!"

The Hero: "Uhh, what?"

Butler: "Hero, have you forgotten the Way of Bounciness which I thought you? Rule number one!"

The Hero: "The bounciness is the romance of the man!"

Butler: "Rule number two!"

The Hero: "If you meet it, you must see it, if you see it, you must touch it, if you touch it, you must squeeze it!"

Butler: "Rule number three!"

The Hero: "Boobies are a work of art! Boobies are the meaning of life!"

Butler: "Correct. So what about the thing?"

The Hero: "Well... I don't really have the opportunity..."

Butler: "Nyohoho, what a cowardly Hero."

The Hero: "You're laughing at me really smugly?! What's with that?!"

Butler: "You're too far away from me."

The Hero: "But (while she was sleeping on my arm), I was between them (she forced it on me)..."

Butler: "What?!"

The Hero: "...I (accidentally) touched them."

Butler: "Well, what a traitor you are. Nyohohoho!"

The Hero: "What?! You hypocrite! That's completely different from what you said just now!!!"

Butler: "Not to the Human World, to all men!"

— — — The Hole in the Gate

Goooooong!

Disciple Engineer: "Well, what a splendid view!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hahahaha! No matter how many times I come here, it always catches my eye."

Goooooong!

Disciple Bard: "How does that massive boulder float like that? It's unbelievable. But what's with this echoing gong-like sound!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Well, that's it."

Disciple Bard: "The gong? And it sounds like a copper Banshee gong? It sounds like it's cracked somehow."

Middle Aged Merchant: "It's probably the dryads."

Disciple Engineer: "Yaaawn."

Disciple Bard: "You're yawning?! The undersides of your eyes are completely black. Didn't you sleep at all?! Really?!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "How do you feel?"

Disciple Engineer: "Ahaha. No, no, I feel great."

Disciple Bard: "Stupid!"

Gooooooong!

Disciple Engineer: "That's right, this is a really wonderful place, isn't it? It's to be expected that I would be excited, right?"

Disciple Bard: "Well, it's brilliant, I suppose."

Disciple Engineer: "I can probably explain it!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hoho, what!"

Disciple Engineer: "Firstly, that massive floating rock is probably because of the gravitational pull."

Disciple Bard: "Gravitational?"

Gooooooong!

Disciple Engineer: "Ahh, I suppose you haven't heard of it before. It's the force that makes things fall to the ground. The force works in opposite directions in the Surface and Underground Worlds. Imagine that we are all living on a big, flat board. This board attracts everything towards it, so no matter which side of the board you're on, even if the board is turning, it won't fall off."

Disciple Bard: "I see..."

Gooooooooong!

Middle Aged Merchant: "What do you mean... a board!? So which side is up?"

Disciple Engineer: "There isn't an up or a down, there's just an other side."

Middle Aged Merchant: "How strange!"

Disciple Engineer: "Well, this large hole is basically a cylindrical portal. In other words, it's a hole on this 'board.' The gravitational pull is weaker inside the portal and it pulls in all directions. That's why this rock is stuck in a state whereby it is unable to fall in any direction, and hence continues to float."

Middle Aged Merchant: "—Hmm."

Disciple Engineer: "That boulder is about the size of a stable, but because it's floating, you could say that it has zero weight. It may just be a minute amount of force, but the sound of the boulder bouncing off the metal inner walls of the portal is probably creating that gong-like sound."

Disciple Bard: "I see."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hmm."

Disciple Engineer: "Avoiding that rock is definitely going to be the biggest challenge in constructing a bridge over the portal."

Disciple Bard: "You can make up a proposal first?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yeah, sure."

Disciple Engineer: "Oh? Didn't I tell you? I've already done up a plan and a work schedule."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Wh-wh-what?! You didn't tell me!"

Disciple Bard: "You fool!"

Disciple Engineer: "Stop, stop. I've got a really hard head. Your hands are really small so you might break them."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Well, I want to see the plan, will you show it to me?"

Disciple Bard: "Grrr."

Disciple Engineer: "Here it is. And here is the work schedule. Well the plan is really just a rough sketch, but basically the dimensions of the most important bridge will be about 12 by 30. I'm sure you can imagine how the designs of the other bridges will look like but if you want me to do up plans for each of them, it's going to take a bit more time."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Why are there so many scrolls?"

Disciple Engineer: "If you crossed it the way you did, by stringing a rope across and carrying goods over by hand, you would be able to cross it even right now. Caravans wouldn't be able to pass, only pedestrians, and it would be dangerous, but even normal people could cross it. That's why the real considerations for building this bridge are safety and ease of transport."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I see, I'm counting on you for that then."

Disciple Engineer: "I've scouted the area for possible routes... Please take a look at the summary. If we followed the red line, it would take about four months and require twelve bridges. One bridge will need to be made of stone but the rest can be wooden bridges. Using this plan will require minimal labour and medium-sized caravans will be able to pass."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Mmm."

Disciple Engineer: "The second line is a different plan. This will be a fairly large-scale project. We will have to guard against landslides at every important point along the way. I also intend to construct a wider road. Thirty bridges will be required. All of them will be made out of stone and it will take eight years."

Disciple Bard: "That's a very large-scale project. It sounds expensive too."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Let's go with the four month long one first."

Disciple Engineer: "That's a very quick decision."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yeah, I'm not so worried about the financial cost as I am about the time it'll take. I want the road to be completed as soon as possible. Are you sure that the route is still passable when it's under constructions?"

Disciple Engineer: "I'll make sure the engineers and labourers are safely secured

before they go in. That should make things better. In any case, this project is supposed to make the place safer to pass through. If an accident were to happen on the job, that wouldn't be good for its image."

Disciple Bard: (Whoa, this guy looks really cool right now. Heh. I've kinda changed my view about him.)

Middle Aged Merchant: "Thank you! It was really good to have met you."

Disciple Engineer: "You give me too much credit." *Beams.*

Middle Aged Merchant: "Shall we head to the City of the Gate, then?"

Disciple Engineer: "Yeah, let's get going. I've got to find some more people for this project, there are also some finer details that I've got to iron out with those people."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I see, I'll make contact with you in due time."

Disciple Engineer: "It's a deal then!"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Let's bridge the two worlds!"

— — — The Cosmic Library, a Temporary Warehouse

Tosses books around.

The Mage: "...Not enough."

Tosses books around.

The Mage: "...Not enough."

Tosses books around.

Star Sparrow: "Mistress, mistress. If you continue this way, you're going to collapse."

The Mage: "But it's not enough."

Star Sparrow: "It is enough, you're the strongest. Chirp, chirp, chirp! There isn't anyone in the world who has more magical ability than you do!"

The Mage: "..."

Star Sparrow: "There you go again!"

The Mage: "..."

Star Sparrow: "When it's difficult to explain, you just go straight to sleep."

The Mage: "...You noisy, chirpy bird."

Casts burning spell.

Star Sparrow: "S-Stop! I'm going to be fried! At least give me some warning!
Chirp, chirp!"

The Mage: "Pleadies is the Seven Sisters. The constellation represents control.
That means consolidation. Authority is the consolidation of disparate power.
The prerequisite to Convergence."

Star Sparrow: "?"

The Mage: "Convergence is the movement towards a single point. Or how about two? 'A good question is often better than a good answer.' I see, I see."

Star Sparrow: "I have no clue what you're talking about, Mistress."

The Mage: "..."

Star Sparrow: "Don't fall asleep, I still don't know what you're talking about."

The Mage: "...Not enough."

Star Sparrow: "?"

Throws books around.

The Mage: "...Not enough."

Star Sparrow: "If you continue at this rate, you're really going to collapse! I'm sorry, but do you really have to work until you start vomiting blood or something?!"

Throws books around.

The Mage: "...I promised the Hero."

Throws books around.

The Mage: "...I won't give up."



Convergence: Mathematically, this refers to the value of an equation as the value of a variable approaches infinity. In Physics, it refers to the state where light reaches a single point. In general, it refers to the movement of many things towards a single destination.

Chapter 3, “Look, you've got some on your mouth, Hero.”

— — — Deep in the Demon King Castle, the Demon King's Bedroom

The Demon King: “It's okay, it's okay. You don't have to treat me like some kind of sick person.”

The Chief Maid: “Don't say that, Your Majesty.”

The Hero: “That's right. You are a sick person.”

The Demon King: “This is an injury, not a disease.”

The Chief Maid: “Yes, well, even so.”

The Female Paladin: “Behave like an adult and just accept the treatment.”

The Hero: “That's right, you'd better behave.”

The Female Paladin: “You too, Hero!”

The Hero: “Ow! Owww!!!”

The Chief Maid: “Well, well.”

The Female Paladin: “You're the Hero so stop acting like you're about to die. You're about to lose to the Demon King, even.”

The Demon King: “Haha, you see, I'm not that bad.”

The Hero: “Heh. If you just leave it alone it'll heal on its own.”

The Female Paladin: “Without treatment, it could get bad...”

The Hero: “Well, I did just take the brunt of a Demon King-class Destruction Spell. That class of magic, combined with the other damage I have taken, did take quite a toll on my recovery ability.”

The Female Paladin: "Now that I think about it, the Hero's recovery ability is quite inhuman."

The Demon King: "Is... that so?"

The Hero: "That's because I'm really healthy."

The Female Paladin: "He's the kind who has never even caught a flu before."

The Hero: "—!"

The Female Paladin: "But he always gets himself into situations that make everybody worried for his life."

The Demon King: "Hehe, the Hero is all wrapped up in bandages too."

The Hero: "Why are you so pleased about that?"

The Chief Maid: "Hehe, it's like a matching outfit. Very cute."

The Demon King: "What? No! No! I was just being empathetic to the Hero's plight and feeling happy that we could find ourselves in similar situations, hence having a shared experience."

The Chief Maid: "It's the same thing."

The Female Paladin: "Aren't you forgetting that you people were saved by my Healing Magic?"

The Demon King: "Thank you, Female Paladin."

The Hero: "Yeah, thanks."

The Female Paladin: "To treat you people, I'm going to have to move to the Demon King Castle for the time being."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Female Paladin: "There's nothing for it, I don't know when I'll be done."

The Chief Maid: "I see, Demon King, please stop being as reckless like before."

You were really saved by the skin of your teeth the last time, when you almost died."

The Demon King: "I'm sorry..."

The Hero: "From now on, leave the reckless things to me!"

The Chief Maid: "You too, Hero."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah!"

The Demon King: "That guy... was strong, right?"

The Hero: "Yeah. He was okay."

The Female Paladin: (The Hero... found himself a match? Look at the state he's in now. This guy's got to be fairly strong, otherwise the Hero wouldn't have had so much trouble.)

The Demon King: "This is a problem."

The Hero: "What?"

The Demon King: "I'm all wrapped up, I won't get to touch your fluffy hair."

The Hero: "Well yeah, it can't be helped."

The Female Paladin: "I can, though?"

The Demon King: "What?!"

The Chief Maid: "I can do it too." *Fluffs hair.*

The Demon King: "Not you too! Why are you doing this!" *Struggles.*

The Hero: "Wait! Sorry but that's a really nice smell."

The Demon King: "Let me go, let me go!"

The Chief Maid: "Hahahaha, if I do this more often, then the Demon King will recover faster!"

The Female Paladin: "This is also an aspect of the recovery process."

— — — — **A Settlement to the South of the Holy Empire**

Wind blows...

Settler: "What's happened?"

Thin Serf: "Don't know."

Small Peasant: "We've told the Village Deacon to come over."

Young Farmer: "If he comes over, then we'll have bread to eat twice a day."

Settler: "I heard that too."

Thin Serf: "Yeah, I really want to have some bread to eat."

Small Peasant: "Me too. Why is it that even though I grow wheat, I haven't had any bread to eat..."

Young Farmer: "My two sisters... died from starvation."

Settler: "..."

Thin Serf: "...Even though we've had a bumper crop of wheat this spring, the price hasn't gone down at all."

Small Peasant: "Well, we've been eating that thing, though."

Young Farmer: "...That thing?"

Settler: "Yeah..."

Thin Serf: "The Demon Apple."

Small Peasant smiles.

Young Farmer: "But that's...!"

Settler: "...We've got no choice."

Thin Serf: "No matter how heretical the crop is, if we don't have anything to eat, we'll die. In our village, no, throughout this entire country, there probably isn't anybody who hasn't eaten it before."

Small Peasant: "Yeah."

Young Farmer: "Is that alright?"

Settler: "What?"

Young Farmer: "I mean, it's heretical, right? Won't you develop demonic characteristics? Won't your hands turn into the cloves of goats, won't you go crazy and die?"

Thin Serf: "Have you seen anyone like that around here?"

Small Peasant: "I haven't..."

Settler: "Potatoes are delicious."

Thin Serf: "Yeah, especially when you boil them in a soup or when you roast them with butter."

Small Peasant: "If you slice them thinly and fry them, they became very sweet."

Young Farmer: "That's..."

Settler: "Well, in the end we have no choice."

Thin Serf: "We really can't follow their instructions."

Small Peasant: "That's right, they've taken away our wealth and our work and our food, we really have nothing left."

Wind blows...

Settler: "Ah."

Bishop: "...How quiet."

Thin Serf: "Your Reverence..."

Small Peasant: "Nice to meet you."

Bishop: "How splendid, Spirit blesses the faithful followers of the Spirit of Light."



The Demon Apple: In the 17th Century, when the potato was first introduced to Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church originally declared it the *Demon Apple* and the *Fruit of Misfortune* in order to discourage its cultivation. However, it became evident that the tough and resilient potato was best suited for the harsh climate of Russia. By the 18th Century, it was commonly known as the *Apple of the Earth* (see French *pomme de la terre*) and became widely cultivated. Even so, up to the 19th Century, Tsars often attempted to ban the cultivation of potatoes, leading to a spate of insurrections.

Young Farmer: "The Bishop! The Bishop gave us his blessings!"

Settler: "That he would even bless such insignificant villagers like ourselves!"

Thin Serf: "Thank you! Thank you!"

Bishop: "The reason why you Children of the Light are gathered here today is to combat the coming evil. This village has many fields and will now produce rations for our soldiers. Furthermore, we will receive divine instructions on the combat with evil. I will reside in this Village for the next half year and I will do my best to serve the Children of the Light."

Settler: "Eh? ...Combat?"

Thin Serf: "We can't do something like that?"

Small Peasant: "But the Bishop himself..."

Bishop: "Rest easy! Children of the Light!"

Bishop: "The Spirit of the Light has given you his blessings. In his infinite charity, he has shown us the way. He has provided you with the holy weapons to take down the Demon Race."

Thin Serf: "Weapons?"

Clank clank.

Bishop: "These metal poles are enough. These metal poles are weapons provided by the Spirit of the Light to blast away the Demon Race, these are muskets. As long as we have these poles, even untrained peasants like yourselves can be as strong as the heroes of old. — Watch!"

Elite Soldiers: "Fire!" *Lights muskets.*

Bang! Bang!

Small Peasant: "What was that?!"

Young Farmer: "It went through the armour!"

Bishop: "This weapon can penetrate a suit of armour from fifty paces away. With this weapon, no matter the claws or teeth of the enemy, no matter how many swords or spears he has, you can take him down from a distance! Once you train to use these weapons, you will be the finest soldiers throughout the land!"

Bishop: "Listen, Children of the Light! Blessed followers. The Primarch himself begs for your help today."

Thin Serf: "The Primarch?!"

Small Peasant: "He's asking for our help?"

Murmuring.

Bishop: "As I am sure you are all aware, far to the South, in the coldest part of the world, a prison is being built! By the Grace of the Spirit, we have managed to confine the Demonic elements to their prison in the South. I am sure you know. This is where we have trapped the heretics who oppose the word of the church, in this land of ice and death. In our charity, we have agreed to let them keep their lives."



Primarch: The highest religious figure in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Holy Church of Light. In our world, the Catholic Church follows the progression of Priest – Bishop – Cardinal – Pope while the Orthodox Church follows the progression of Priest – Metropolitan – Patriarch – Ecumenical Patriarch. The Church of Light goes by Priest – Bishop – Primarch with the Primarch being the supreme head of the Church.

Settler: "The Church has said this lots of times already..."

Young Farmer: "We're really being beaten back by these Demons."

Bishop: "However, despite this, these heretics have performed the ultimate betrayal by stealing a treasure of the Children of Light!"

Small Peasant: "Eh?"

Bishop: "What they have taken are the remains of the Spirit of Light. In other words, they are relics! These relics represent the hope of all the Children of Light, they are a symbol of His resurrection, and by taking these relics and hiding them from us, they are insulting not just the Church but the Spirit himself!"

Settler: "?! The Spirit?!"

Bishop: "These are the words of the Primarch himself! We cannot overlook this blasphemous transgression. Even if we have to sacrifice our own lives, we will

reclaim the Holy Remains! This is a sacred duty we all have! Children of Light!
Rise and take up your muskets! Let us show them the strength of our faith!"

— — — **The Kingdom of Metal, a Developing Settlement**

Patrolling Soldier: "Alright, here we are."

Refugee Family Father: "So this is it!"

Refugee Family Mother: "It's cold..." *Shivers.*

Refugee Family Daughter: "It's so big! And the road goes all the way to that hill over there!"

Patrolling Soldier: "I'm afraid there's nothing we can do about the cold. You are in the South, after all. If you work hard then maybe you'll sweat it out! Alright, let's go check out the fields. I'm sure there's got to be someone around."

Refugee Family Father: "Alright!"

Walking through the snow.

Refugee Family Father: "Alright, horse, I know you're a bit old but we're almost there. Just a bit more."

Walking through the snow.

Female Settler Militia: "Hey! Hello there, Sergeant!"

Patrolling Soldier: "Hey! How's it going?"

Settler Militia: "Alright. We've managed to clear all the weeds on the hill over there."

Female Settler Militia: "So now the place is ready for the potato fields."

Patrolling Soldier: "I see! I've brought a new family over."

Refugee Family Father: "We come from the Kingdom of the Kingfisher, it is a

pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

Refugee Family Daughter: “Hello!”

Settler Militia: “Kingfisher! That's a long way away!”

Female Settler Militia: “Hey, are you alright? You're looking a bit blue.”

Refugee Family Mother: “It's very cold...”

Patrolling Soldier: “Right, I'm not feeling too good so this is as far as I'll take you.”

Refugee Family Father: “If it's possible, would my wife be able to rest first? The two of us can start to work. Please.”

Refugee Family Mother: “Hey...”

Settler Militia: “Alright, well let's go to the mustering grounds first.”

Refugee Family Father: “Hey! What are you saying! Take a look. Hey, is it possible... that you're pregnant?”

Patrolling Soldier: “Eh?”

Refugee Family Father: “What?!”

Refugee Family Mother: “Yeah... I don't know for sure but based on last month, I've been having this suspicion...”

Refugee Family Daughter: “For real?!”

Female Settler Militia: “Take a look! She can barely stand in this cold! Let alone go to the mustering grounds!”

Settler Militia: “Really?”

Female Settler Militia: “It's all because you're completely hopeless at finding a wife.”

Patrolling Soldier: “Wh-what should we do?!”

Settler Militia: "This is terrible!"

Refugee Family Daughter: "Only a guy would say that."

Settler Militia: "You haven't given birth before either!"

Female Settler Militia: "Even without having given birth, a girl should know these sorts of things! Alright, let's get you on these blankets first."

Refugee Family Mother: "Umm... I wouldn't want to use your blankets like that."

Female Settler Militia: "Don't worry, these are military supplies. We'll just borrow them for a bit. They're made of lamb's wool so they're very warm."

Refugee Family Father: "Thank you..."

Female Settler Militia: "Alright, we'll carry you over to the Village Chief. Your family can use the house next to mine. You can start by gathering kindling and Peat."

Settler Militia: "Okay! I'll run ahead and give him some warning."

Female Settler Militia: "Good! Prepare some warm clothes and some food! Get the Village Chief's wife to help."

Patrolling Soldier: "I'll leave it to you then."

Female Settler Militia: "Of course! Well then, let's go. It's small and nothing spectacular, but it's a house. It's just been built so they all look the same and it's easy to get lost, but after a while you learn to differentiate. My family also lives in one of those houses."

Refugee Family Father: "Are you sure? You've been so nice to us."

Female Settler Militia: "What are you saying? Everyone here, whether you're from a foreign land or from one of the Southern Kingdoms, is working hard to make sure we have enough to eat. We're all comrades planting potatoes together!"



Peat: Peat is a substance created from the fermentation of dead plants over a long period of time until they become a solid, rock-like substance. As it contains many impurities and high water content, it does not burn easily. However, when peat is pressed and dried, it becomes a fantastic source of fuel.

----- The Demon World, Replacement Conference Venue

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Okay."

The Cyclops: "...We're all here."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "My Khans, thank you for your hard work. Well then, Her Majesty the Demon King has temporarily given us her authority, and so that this Kurultai does not stagnate and that we do not omit any important details, we must carry on. Black Knight."

The Hero: "With regards to this issue, apart from representing the Demon King's authority over the many Tribes, as much as possible, I would like to seek and respect the counsel and advice of the Khans as we seek to hit the nail on the head. After all, I am still an outsider."

The Queen of Fairies: "Don't say such a thing."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "We apologise for causing you any trouble, you are the will of the Demon King."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Yeah."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Anyone who has anything to say in opposition to that is a disgrace."

The Baron of Steel: "What shall we discuss today?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Hmmm."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Firstly, I believe that domestic issues of each of the tribes should be settled internally, as they have always been. The purpose of this Kurultai is to address matters which affect the Demon King. In other words, problems which concern the entire Demon Race and the Subterranean World, matters between Tribes, and vital opinions. Or rather, issues which a single Tribe alone will be unable to settle."

The Queen of Fairies: "Agreed."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "I have no objection."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Sounds good."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "So basically, we settle our own problems."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "The most pressing issue is the Tribe of the Pale."

The Cyclops: "...Yeah."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Indeed, the Tribe of the Pale has left the Kurultai and begun their independent movements. Reports have shown that they have returned to their own lands to regroup and reinforce at an alarming speed."

The Queen of Fairies: "If the Tribe of the Pale has indeed made enemies out of the entire Demon Race and started on their path to brutality and carnage, then we the Tribe of the Fairies will not stand aside and let it happen."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "We Banshees will also fight to the end, though I suppose it will be impossible to avoid enormous casualties."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The Tribe of the Fang too!"

The Hero: "No, wait for a while."

The Cyclops: "...Why? ...Black Knight?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What is your view?"

The Hero: "I have fought with their new King. His skills are the real deal. The Tribe of the Pale is really strong, stronger than we think."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Hmm... It seems that they've increased their abilities since the last chaotic period."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "If the Black Knight says so, it must be so."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Well then, let us focus this session on resolving the issue with the Tribe of the Pale."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Yes."

The Baron of Steel: "There are many other issues, but this is the most pressing one."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Let's solve the issue ahead of us."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Good."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Firstly, the Tribe of the Pale has a new King. Secondly, this new King and the army which he now leads attempted to assassinate the Demon King and have then fled from the Kurultai. Thirdly, this new King and his army are currently heading back to their own territory. Fourthly, they number a few tens of thousands. Fifthly, the New King of the Pale bears the Sigil of the Successor to the Demon Throne and his battle ability is out of this world."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "That sounds about right."

The Baron of Steel: "What an extremely difficult situation."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "In other words, the problem is..."

The Queen of Fairies: "This is the will of the entire Tribe of the Pale."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Huh? You're saying that the whole tribe are traitors?"

The Queen of Fairies: "Not necessarily. Especially since the position of the New King of the Pale was decided officially at the Kurultai, even though it was a very rushed decision. Have we considered that the New King may be doing all this without any official authorisation?"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Yeah."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "In fact, the entire nation of the Tribe of the Pale may be unaware that it was actually the New King who has betrayed the Demon King."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "In that case, how about we attack their cities before the armies of the Tribe of the Pale get there. If we do that, then whether the cat is white or black, it doesn't matter. If it's white, then we've reduced the number of enemy forces. If it's black, we've managed to disrupt the enemy's supply lines and prevent his units from joining up."

The Baron of Steel: "That's all very nice to say, but the Tribe of the Pale moves at a startling rate. Even if we left today to pursue them, we wouldn't make it."

The Cyclops: "...White... Black..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I believe that much is clear."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "So what should we do?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Since we're on the matter of their movement speed.... We do not want to pursue the armies of the Pale. In other words, if we do manage to fight them, we will be in their lands, where their reinforcements can arrive easily. In fact, if we recklessly attack them, we will leave our own cities exposed. Rather, we cannot even ensure the safety of our own lands."

The Queen of Fairies: "You have a point."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "So what you're saying is that using our forces to surround their cities will have the reverse effect?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What, so we can't do that after all?"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The combined strength of all our armies

exceeds 50,000 strong. If we simply gather all our forces, the Tribe of the Pale will taste despair. The one who betrayed the Demon King is the New King, and he himself has even backstabbed the entire Demon World. In other words, this is an independent act from a single individual and so he may not have very much support. I do not believe that the Tribe of the Pale are all battle-crazed, blood-seeking maniacs.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “How very troublesome...”

The Baron of Steel: “To begin with, the Tribe of the Pale has always had a very strict disciplinarian military junta in place. We must consider that possibility also.”

The Cyclops: “Hmm...”

The East Fortress Base Commander: (On the other hand, in the worst case scenario, if the New King goes so far as to take his entire Tribe, apart from the military hostage, some terrible things could happen. He's the kind of guy who could do things that I never even imagined possible, like poisoning, assassination, and who knows what else. He could indeed be planning something truly heinous. This guy has got to be an unspeakable shock to the Demon World...)

The Fire Dragon Lord: “First, let us agree that we cannot avoid letting the armies of the Pale return to their lands. This is something which is beyond us.”

The Queen of Fairies: “Yes.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “Indeed.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “However, on top of that, we cannot let the Army of the Pale out of our sight. Having seen what terrible things they are capable of here, the Army of the Pale could be like a snake, moving through the Demon World and causing immense sacrifices in their wake.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Indeed.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “The lands outside of those belonging to the Pale need to be heavily surveillanced so that we can have as early a warning as possible as to

the movements of the Army of the Pale."

The Queen of Fairies: "Let us Fairies assume this responsibility. We may be weak and small but we are invisible under the cover of darkness and noiseless as we move."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "If the Fairies see anything, then the Tribe of the Fiends will relay the intelligence. The Fiends are everywhere throughout the Demon World after all. Since ancient times, we have always been the ones running the postage service and the pony express."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Is everybody agreeable?"

The East Fortress Base Commander nods.

The Chieftain of the Tattooed nods.

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Then we will leave this matter to the Fairies and the Fiends. If there is anything we can help with, do not hesitate to request it."

The Queen of Fairies: "Understood."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Leave it to us."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Alright, let's say we do discover the Army of the Pale."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Then we must strike fast and swiftly."

The Baron of Steel: "How?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The Tribe of the Fang shall be the vanguard."

The Cyclops: "...Hmm."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Because of this incident, we have suffered an extreme humiliation. We must be the first to throw our lives into the fray."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Is that alright, Witch-Queen?"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "...Hmm, I understand. Alright, I will leave the

vanguard to you. However, the ones who have had the longest contact with the Pale are us Banshees. That's why we will form the second formation. Should our lands become invaded though, then I cannot guarantee that we will not be the vanguard. To us, the protection of our country and our people is of utmost importance. I hope you will forgive me on this."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Of course I understand the desire to protect your own people. I will abide."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Well then, the Banshees and the Fang, I trust your skills, however I must reiterate that we do not yet know the true nature of the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale. Please exercise due caution."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Got it."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Leave it to us."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Well then, we the Dragons will take a support role. For the four Demon Tribes who have been mobilised, we will provide food and all necessary supplies."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Thank you!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "I understand."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "I have two points I wish to bring up."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What is it, Khan of the Gate?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "The first is about the refugees. No matter how despicable the Tribe of the Pale has acted, the fact is that they are merely small flies carrying out the will of the government and there are, in fact, exceptions. The number is not very large but there are many living in the cities all over the place. I would like to ensure their protection."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Why do you care about such small details? It's just a few people. I don't even think they have any effect on us."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "It's true that they do not greatly affect the war. However, we should address this issue for the sake of the situation after the

war. In fact, who can guarantee that we will not gang up on the Tribe of the Pale and exterminate them?"

The Cyclops: "...Hmm."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "That's what this war is starting to seem like. Can we promise that we won't try to exterminate the Tribe of the Pale, massacre their women and children, and leave none standing? That would be extremely unlawful. However, how can we assure that the Tribe of the Pale will not hate us after this? From now on, they will tell stories to their descendants of 'How the innocent and the defenceless Tribe of the Pale was beset on all sides by the heinous plots of the other Tribes,' forming their national narrative to their children and grandchildren."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "But that's not true."

The Hero: (...This guy has really read the situation completely.)

The East Fortress Base Commander: "That's why we have to communicate the idea that that is not true, otherwise the situation could get bad very quickly. The Tribe of the Pale are but one race, and if we all unite against them, how can they win? We all the more need to settle the after-effects of the war. Sending all the troublesome elements to the City of the Gate is fine too. Here we've got all kinds of Demons, and even Humans, mixing around with each other. The damage they will incur will be small."

The Baron of Steel nods.

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Right, and your other point?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "This one is a bit more important. It's about relief aid."

The Queen of Fairies: "Hmm."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "This is related to what I was saying earlier, but just what are we going to begin? Is this going to be a debate between comrades, or a full-blown war, or a series of small skirmishes?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Well, to begin with, the Tribe of the Pale unceremoniously

betrayed and attacked us. We wish to have them take responsibility for their actions and clarify the blame."

The Baron of Steel: "That's right, we cannot allow these questions to remain unanswered."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "But what does that have to do with the lives of the people? The Tribe of the Pale must accept the blame. That is the right thing to do, and they must also answer and address the concerns of our citizens."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Indeed."

The Cyclops: "They must... tell the people... loudly."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hmm."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "I also believe that that is important. This is about prosecuting the New King of the Pale, who caused chaos in the Kurultai, who committed patricide, who proceeded to commandeer the Army of the Pale to attack the other Tribes."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Patricide?! For real?!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "No, I can't say for sure but that's what they're saying."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...I see."

The Queen of Fairies: "It has not been confirmed, though."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "So he must answer for all of these?"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "That is an interesting idea."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "We should try to understand the fatigue and sadness in the hearts of our people who, despite earnestly tilling and cultivating their fields, have been forced to witness the savage destruction of their temples and lands due to the ravages of conflict. If their hearts get tired, then their hands stop and their feet stop. Once their body stops, what we are facing is famine. War is a very difficult thing but to the people, the most difficult

thing is not knowing what to do. Because they do not know what their country or their soldiers are doing, they do not know what their next course of action should be. This feeling of powerlessness can really lower morale and make them feel like they have worthless presences which can steadily cause the decay of large parts of the society. Our cities, our people, our business, they will all decay. And all of these come from the decay of the morale in their hearts.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “...”

The Hero: “...”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Hence I believe that we should clearly lay out how the situation has come to be, what has happened, how bad the situation currently is, what our methods of dealing with the conflict are, and what we hope to gain from this war to the people. Well, this is a war, so of course we can't possibly be telling them everything, and we don't actually even need to tell them the entire truth...”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Hmm, in other words, this is what you want to achieve? All of the people will now be firmly tied to the fate of the battle whether or not they participate in it directly; it's a state of Total War and everybody is a soldier. As generals, we should try to boost the morale of our soldiers.”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Yes, yes. That's what I mean.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “However, hmm...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Alright then, we should decide just what sort of conclusion we are hoping to achieve in this battle against the Demons of the Pale.”

The Queen of Fairies: “...Conclusion.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “That's right. We will fight the Tribe of the Pale where they exit from their lands. But if we do only that, then the war will never end. I'm not saying that we should attack their cities and subjugate their lands, but how else can we end this war?”



Total War: This refers to the mobilisation of the industrial and military output of the entire country in times of war. In order to back up the war machine, even if not all the citizens go to the battlefield, they all still have important roles to play in ensuring the supply chain is maintained, the lack of which will lead to defeat. This concept was first promoted in the early 20th century during the First World War. The Base Commander and the Silver Tiger Lord's dialogue on this matter also shows that they are aware of this condition.

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Indeed.” (—Could the Demon King really have been considering our lives and futures all this while...)

The East Fortress Base Commander: "...This is very difficult. I have just joined the Council so I'm not completely cognizant of the relationships that each of the races has with the Tribe of the Pale yet."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Well, in more chaotic times, we the Tribe of the Banshees have been at war with the Tribe of the Pale for a very long time. You could say that there is a deep-seated hatred and resentment against the Tribe of the Pale. However, these were issues related to sovereignty and ownership of the land, and at the time, it was very common for wars to start for this reason.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “We also were at a never-ending war with the Fiends.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “At the time, all the Tribes, big or small, were fighting in the chaos. The neutral Tribes and the mercenary Tribes were also at loggerheads in trying to mediate or prevent the mediation of the conflict.”

The Hero: “I see...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Hmm.”

The Cyclops: "Tell... the people..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "That's right. First, let's tell them, 'The New King of the Pale has betrayed the Demon King and attacked the Kurultai.' That's a simple truth they should know about. To those citizens who are afraid of attacks by the Pale, we can tell them that the Army of the Pale has retreated to their own territory and they are in minimal danger at the time being. At the same time, we can also increase the size of our garrisons and provide more opportunities for recruitment."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "That seems like an appropriate response."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "As for how the war should be concluded, I believe we should gather feedback from the various Tribes and see what the public sentiment is like."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Then for now, this is how we will deal with the Pale."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Yeah."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Shall we return to our territories?"

The Baron of Steel: "Hmm... If I may have a word, Khan of the Gate. This is about trade."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Understood."

The Cyclops: "...Actually, what if we spread some rumours about the loud one?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Is that alright, Black Knight?"

The Hero: "Ohh, it just gets better and better. Fire Dragon Lord, I'll leave this one to you."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "What are you saying! Hahahaha!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "That being said, how is Her Majesty the Demon King?"

The Hero: "She still can't get up from her bed but she seems to be doing much

better."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "That's good."

The Hero: "I'll be sure to inform her of today's proceedings."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Thank you, Black Knight."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Right then, that's the end of today's Conference. If nothing exceptional happens, the next Conference will take place in 40 days. Please continue to track and report on the movements of the Pale."

Together: "Long live the Demon King!"

— — — Deep in the Demon King Castle, the Demon King's Bedroom

The Female Paladin: "Hey, open your mouth."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "What does that face mean?"

The Demon King: "This scene is something should be going on between the Hero and I..."

The Female Paladin: "The Hero is busy at the Conference."

The Demon King: "That's why I said..."

The Female Paladin: "Ahhhh."

The Demon King: "Mm."

The Female Paladin: "...Ahhh."

The Demon King: "Uhh..."

The Female Paladin: "Here you go."

The Demon King: "...How humiliating."

The Female Paladin: "We're friends, it's weird that you care about this."

The Demon King: "Really? Is that so?"

The Female Paladin: "Yes."

The Demon King: "Well... When you speak to me or the Sisters, you use words which are a bit nicer."

The Female Paladin: "...Really?"

The Demon King: "Yeah."

The Female Paladin: "Well I suppose that's what happens when you lead armies. You get used to speaking to men all the time, I suppose you use different words speaking to women."

The Demon King: "I see."

The Female Paladin: "...I guess it's off-putting that I'm not womanly enough."

The Demon King: "That's not true, I find you very womanly."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "?"

The Female Paladin: "Even though you're the Demon King, I am not convinced."

The Demon King: "Hmm. That's not true. I... Well, it's true that the size is big, but when it comes to maternal instinct, to loveliness and attention to detail... When it comes to being sexy, I still need a lot of guidance. When it comes to being a woman, I'm still vastly inferior to you."

The Female Paladin: "I wouldn't say that."

The Demon King: "To begin with, what exactly does it mean to be womanly?"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "I've tried being like those ones in fairy tales, helping him pick his ear, even sleeping in the same bed, but I don't think it's had a great effect on the Hero. ...To begin with, it feels like the world keeps trying to crash in between us every time there's an opening, we're never going to become a couple."

The Female Paladin: "I may be slightly biased about this but I think there's something we should consider."

The Demon King: "Really?"

The Female Paladin: "...I don't know why though."

The Demon King: "Oh come on."

The Female Paladin: "Maybe it's the Hero who has been avoiding us."

The Demon King: "..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "Let's stop this conversation."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "Ahh! It's really going to be nostalgic having the Little Sister Maid's cooking again."

The Female Paladin: "Of course. Even though the cooking in this castle is really good too."

The Demon King: "That's right, the Little Maid Sister's cooking has a certain special taste that the food here doesn't."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, I know what you're saying."

The Demon King: "I want pie."

The Female Paladin: "Ahahahahaha. I know how you feel. But, this is what we've got right now. Ahhhhh."

The Demon King: “...”

The Female Paladin: “Hehehe.”

The Demon King: “This is really humiliating.”

The Female Paladin: “When you get healthier you can take revenge.”

The Demon King: “Of course. Only the Hero is allowed to do this.”

The Female Paladin: “Eh?”

The Demon King: “I know just what you're trying to do!”

— — — — **The Holy Empire, the Merchant's Quarter**

Wheat Wholesaler: “Wheat! Wheat! Barley too, just in! Freshly harvested! It'll taste great as bread or even oatmeal! One bag for just five new silvers!”

Obese Citizen: “What about the old silvers?”

Wheat Wholesaler: “We don't accept them. You can't use that money in the Holy Empire. The only people who use that currency are the barbarians of the South.”

Travelling Merchant: “But there're still lots of old silver and gold coins in the city...”

Wheat Wholesaler: “Just go to the municipal office and you'll be able to exchange your old currency for the new currency.”

Obese Citizen: “But three and a half old gold coins are only worth one new gold coin...”

Travelling Merchant: “It's a really bad timing.”

Wheat Wholesaler: “Alright, freshly ground wheat! How about some wheat?”

Obese Citizen: “...Only the really rich can afford to eat such wheat.”

Travelling Merchant: "Dammit."

Walks further.

Innkeeper: "That being said, have you heard the rumour?"

Obese Citizen: "Rumour?"

Travelling Merchant: "The rumour about the Village of the Children of Light?"

Innkeeper: "Yeah, that one."

Obese Citizen: "What is it?"

Innkeeper: "Apparently, beginning in the Holy Empire, there have been new villages appearing all over the Continent. Most of them are near the forests, or in the mountains, or in those old, extinct villages that used to be ancient battlegrounds. Those villages have great wheat harvest and nobody worries about going hungry."

Obese Citizen: "What's that all about!"

Travelling Merchant: "It seems like this isn't made up. The Church has been gathering farmers and settlers to train for some kind of special duty."

Innkeeper: "This is the latest news but it seems that the whole point of this is the Holy Relic."

Obese Citizen: "Holy Relic...?"

Innkeeper: "You'll be shocked when I say this but apparently, it's the remains of the Spirit Himself!"

Obese Citizen: "What?!"

Travelling Merchant: "What?! Is that for real?"

Innkeeper: "Well, it's a rumour so I can't say for sure."

Obese Citizen: "I always thought the Spirit was like the wind or a ray of light."

Travelling Merchant: "Yeah."

Innkeeper: "It seems the Church is saying that the Demons have stolen the Holy Relic. In order to seize back the Holy Relic, they're going to need a lot of elite soldiers. That's the whole point of the Villages of the Children of Light."

Obese Citizen: "Hmm... Well, they don't go hungry."

Travelling Merchant: "I've heard about this in other cities too."

Innkeeper: "It's the blessings of the Spirit. They say in those villages, they get bread twice a day, and for *lunch*, they get stew. The bread they eat in the evenings is white and fluffy."

Obese Citizen: "White bread?!"

Travelling Merchant: "That sounds really extravagant."

Innkeeper: "Yeah."

Travelling Merchant: "How wonderful."

Innkeeper: "It seems that the Church is really serious about this."

Travelling Merchant: "Serious...?"

Innkeeper: "Yeah, it's just between us, but it seems that the reason for the hike in the price of wheat is because the Church has been buying up all the wheat and sending them to the Villages of the Children of Light."

Obese Citizen: "!"

Travelling Merchant: "Really? I suppose that's possible."

Innkeeper: "Right?"

Obese Citizen: "But if they do that, we're really going to have a war."

Travelling Merchant: "I guess so. But it's for the Spirit, so there's nothing for it."

Innkeeper: "Yeah, Spirit be with us."

Obese Citizen: "Spirit be with us! At least with some paltry black bread, so we can live."



Lunch: People in the Middle Ages generally ate three meals a day, but out of these, the most important was lunch. Breakfast and dinner were all light meals while lunch provided energy to do the day's work.

Travelling Merchant: "But I guess I would really like to take a look at one of these villages."

Obese Citizen: "Rather than just look, I'd like to live there. Wouldn't you? To retrieve the remains of the Spirit for a righteous war, and you even get food to eat. Rather than starving here, I want to go to that village."

Clergyman: "That's not impossible."

Travelling Merchant: "Eh?"

Clergyman: "I apologise, I could not help but overhear your conversation... The number of Villages of the Children of Light are increasing as war with the pusillanimous Demon Race draws nearer. You should try coming for confessions every night. We will be choosing some excellent people to establish a new Village of the Children of Light soon. The place will be packed with people trying to achieve this special blessing."

Innkeeper: "For real, Your Holiness!"

Obese Citizen: "Really?!"

Clergyman: "I am not a bishop yet but this is not a lie. Even tonight, a new squad

is assembling their luggage and mobilising."

Obese Citizen: "I want to go too!"

Travelling Merchant: "Me too!"

Clergyman: "Then, you must surely come to the Church. His Holiness is waiting for your righteous contribution."

— — — The City of the Gate, a Cheap Motel

Disciple Engineer: "Well, this is great."

Disciple Bard: "Mm. Yeah..."

Disciple Engineer: "Is this sheep? I've never eaten it before."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah, the Surface World keeps them as livestock."

Disciple Engineer: "The Surface World? To be expected of the City of the Gate. There're lots of interesting food. I discover new things every day. Even the architecture is completely new and interesting."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah..."

Disciple Engineer: "What's up?"

Disciple Bard: "Eh? — No, nothing."

Disciple Engineer: "This is great... Yum, yum."

Disciple Bard: "..."

Disciple Engineer: "Alright, here we go!"

Disciple Bard: "Hey, we're eating, put the maps away."

Disciple Engineer: "Sorry, sorry. But I've got a whole bunch of new ideas and techniques that I've picked up. I feel like I should write a memo so I don't forget

them."

Disciple Bard: "You stupid engineer."

Disciple Engineer: "It can't be helped, I want that bridge up as soon as possible."

Disciple Bard: "Bridge?"

Disciple Engineer: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "You've really changed."

Disciple Engineer: "Is that so? I was about to say that about you as well."



Sheep: For about 10,000 years, sheep have been reared by humans as livestock. Their meat is more nutritious than that of mountain goats and they are capable of surviving in harsher climates than pigs, hence making them one of the most versatile livestock. Moreover, sheep's wool can be used to make clothes as their hide can be used to produce leather and vellum. Truly a livestock for which no part is wasted. Even today, many people live the nomadic life, herding their sheep from pasture to pasture.

Disciple Bard: "Eh?"

Disciple Engineer: "You're the one who sings like you're possessed and you actually go on for hours writing new plays."

Disciple Bard: "Well, I guess."

Disciple Engineer: "That's something that comes from inside you, right?"

Disciple Bard: "Eh?"

Disciple Engineer: "In other words, that's the way you express what's inside your heart to somebody else, even without using words. Building that route, for me, is like water just waiting to gush out, it feels like it's about to overflow and when it crashes down, I want to stand up and shout, 'Build it faster! Finish it faster!' But, you know? Once we finish that bridge, people will be able to satisfy their stomachs and their heart's desires without having to risk their lives to transport their goods. The faster we do this, the better their lives will be."

Disciple Bard: "...Yeah."

Disciple Engineer: "?"

Disciple Bard: "It's like a song. It's a harmony which uses a voice to express the voiceless emotion you've created. Inside your heart, you can already hear the fiddle, the lyre, the cornetto echoing bravely. It makes you want to hurry up and produce that melody."



Fiddle: This was originally a woodwind instrument similar to the piccolo and was often used to play folk-songs. Over time, the definition was extended to the violin.

Lyre: The lyre is an ancient Greek stringed instrument much like a harp. It is often featured in Greek frescoes and drawings, and has the shape of an omega (Ω). Over time, this has evolved into many different instruments such as harps and lutes.

Cornetto: The cornetto or the zink is a brass instrument shaped like an animal's horn. In ancient times, a real horn was probably used. It was extensively used in 15th – 16th century European music.

Disciple Engineer: "Hmm. So I suppose you understand. In any case, because of this, I can't take my mind off it even when we're eating."

Disciple Bard: "Hey, Engineer."

Disciple Engineer: "What? ...Nomnomnom."

Disciple Bard: "Have you heard about the Holy Relic?"

Disciple Engineer: "Huh? What's that?"

Disciple Bard: "I'm not really sure. But it seems like there some kind of rumour that's been going on here."

Disciple Engineer: "Mmm."

Disciple Bard: "I was really drawn by that rumour. Sometimes when the wind of curiosity blows too strong, I feel that I must go out and do something, like my soul itself is being propelled towards it. I start dancing and when I stop, I cannot hear the sounds of my surroundings or the environment. All I hear are the echoes of that siren call in my head..."

Disciple Engineer: "..."

Disciple Bard: "I want to go on a trip."

Disciple Engineer: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "But I also want to be together with you."

Disciple Engineer: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "..."

Disciple Engineer: "..."

Disciple Bard: "..."

Disciple Engineer: "Don't make such a face."

Disciple Bard: "But—"

Disciple Engineer: "Will you go far? To the Surface?"

Disciple Bard: "Yeah... I don't know when I'll be back."

Disciple Engineer: "But you will be back?"

Disciple Bard: "Of course I will."

Disciple Engineer: "Then nothing is going to change. Go ahead."

Disciple Bard: "But..."

Disciple Engineer: "Hahahahaha."

Disciple Bard: "...?"

Disciple Engineer: "Then I'll make a splendid bridge, and it will welcome you when you come home."

Disciple Bard: "Ahh—"

Disciple Engineer: "Just go! My bridge will always be waiting for you to come back. Of course, I will too. My bridge is just waiting for a true legend to pass through. The Genius Writer of the Subterranean World! The Demon Singer! The Demon Singer who headed to the Surface World and discovered the most beautiful and melodious music a person could create! My bridge will be the path through which this music passes."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah."

Disciple Engineer: "Go see some wonderful things."

Disciple Bard: "I'll make sure to hear a lot of beautiful things."

Disciple Engineer: "We'll meet again in this City."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah... It's a promise."

Disciple Engineer: "We are Crimson Disciples after all."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah, it's a promise."

— — — Deep in the Demon King Castle, the Demon King's Bedroom

Knock knock.

The Hero: "...Hmm."

Knock knock.

The Hero: "Must be sleeping."

Door opens slowly.

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "She is sleeping."

The Demon King: "Mmm."

The Hero: "That's a very adorable face to make while sleeping."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Well, there's no choice. Even though it was a long trip..."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Her hair is so soft... She's a real beauty, I hope she realises that one day."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Demon King."

The Demon King: "...?..."

The Hero: "Are you awake?"

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King rubs her eyes.

The Hero: "Good morning."

The Demon King: "...Good morning."

The Hero: "Still sleepy?"

The Demon King: "I want some tea."

The Hero: "Sure. Looks like the Chief Maid left some here."

The Demon King: "Thanks."

Pours tea.

The Hero: "I'm home, Demon King."

The Demon King: "Welcome back, Hero."

The Hero: "Is your chest alright?"

The Demon King: "Yeah, it's not painful anymore. I'm breathing normally too."

The Hero: "Then I suppose you can get out of bed soon."

The Demon King: "I've had enough of it, it's too lazy."

The Hero: "Alright, I've brought lots of presents today."

The Demon King: "What?"

The Hero: "First, this. Can you see it? It's the Little Sister Maid's new creation,

Custard Pudding."

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "You'll understand when you eat it."

The Demon King: "Mmm... Ah! This is—"

The Hero: "Delicious?"

The Demon King: "It's not sweet! It's cold... and creamy... I've never had it before. What's this? Is it the sap of some tree? It's completely new."

The Hero: "It's egg and sugar."

The Demon King: "What... From the most regular of ingredients, what kind of techniques were used to make something so radically different."

The Hero: "Yeah, I was shocked by that too."

The Demon King: "What an interesting deliciousness. The Chief Maid said this too, 'Cooking is an essential skill for any maid but that girl's extremely gluttony behaviour has caused her to transcend the culinary powers of even the most powerful of Demons.'"

The Hero: "Hahaha! Indeed."

The Demon King: "This is really yummy."

The Hero: "I've got other stuff."

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "Here. This is from the Base Commander."

The Demon King: "Oh, a letter... Give me a knife."

The Hero: "Yeah."

Cuts.

The Demon King: "...And this is from the Young Merchant. Hmm. It was made in one of the manufactories in the City of the Gate."

The Hero: "That's fast."

The Demon King: "I met him earlier."

The Hero: "What an unpleasant yet necessary relationship."

The Demon King: "What?"

The Hero: "It was a while ago but you gave him a trading decree for the City of the Gate, right? It's your personal demesne, so it's fine, I guess."

The Demon King: "Yeah, he wrote it here too. These are greetings, but also a confirmation. It shouldn't be much of a problem this time... But if we continue to issue such trading licenses without limitations, we might have a lot of trouble."

The Hero: "Trouble?"

The Demon King: "They might buy, sell, or borrow trading decrees."

The Hero: "Ahh, I see."

The Demon King: "Well, the Young Merchant probably wouldn't do such a thing that would destroy our trust in him."

The Hero: "Oh, then?"

The Demon King: "He wants to introduce livestock, like sheep and cattle, and also a clear financial and banking structure."

The Hero: "What? Isn't there already a financial structure? Seems like the money is used pretty normally."

The Demon King: "It's true that it can be used, but it's basically just extracting gold and using it directly. Before this whole affair with the Humans began, in other words, before I even met you, I had been trying to revolutionise the economy of the Demon World but at that time we were still in experimental stages."

The Hero: "Hmm."

The Demon King: "If you're talking about the Blessings of the Earth, the Demon World has more blessings than the Surface World. We don't have many areas which are extremely cold and we do have many undeveloped lands. These can be sources of conflict. In the Demon World, more than the Human World, civil engineering works like irrigation and water treatment as well as cultural works like music or legends are extremely important. In response to this—"

The Hero: "What?"

The Demon King: "Uhh, well... Actually, I have a few students here."



Pudding: Along with a variety of other ingredients, pudding achieves its consistency through the addition of gelatin or corn starch. Pudding's versatility means that it can be used as an ingredient, a main dish, or a dessert. Custard pudding is widely consumed in Japan, where it is known as *purin*. It became extremely popular around the turn of the 17th century.

The Hero: "Huh?"

The Demon King: "Because I've been gallivanting with you, I've kind of abandoned them."

The Hero: "Hey, hey!"

The Demon King: "Well, they're good youngsters. It's not like they'll die if I let them be."

The Hero: "That's a very abandonist thinking."

The Demon King: "The world isn't in the best of shape to have their techniques applied, so they haven't really been doing anything."

The Hero: (I feel quite sorry for them...)

The Demon King: "Well, that's what it's like in the Demon World. To begin with, it's obvious that the Demon World is a place for the Tribes to gain riches. If they can build their houses and their fields in peace, then they'll be able to become prosperous. As a result of this, the currency system needs to be revolutionised in order to boost the economy and the agricultural sector. The Subterranean World could really benefit from such changes."

The Hero: "I see. Then what of the Young Merchant's proposal?"

The Demon King: "On the issue of the banks, I'll put that on hold first. It's far too early, and I wouldn't want a situation where the financial institutions of both worlds are controlled by one person. I'll write back to explain this situation. As for the sheep and cattle, I have no intention of stopping it. It's actually probably a good thing."

The Hero: "Now that I think about it, the guy doesn't know that the Scholar is the Demon King."

The Demon King: "Really?"

The Hero: "He knows that you're a Demon, but I don't think he's considered that you were the Demon King."

The Demon King: "In that case, I'll use the royal stationery of the Demon King. In fact, I'll put the royal seal on it."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Demon King: "Or maybe I'll just leave it as it is. It's better for him to realise it naturally. I'll reply in a while."

The Hero: "Alright. Next thing."

The Demon King: "What's next?"

The Hero: "This is a letter from the Elder Sister Maid. It's quite heavy."

Rips open.

The Demon King: "Hohoho."

Unfurls letter.

The Hero: "What does it say?"

The Demon King: "This is... Hmm. It's a report on the potato cultivation. This is a daily summary of the Village of Wintering. This is a report on the tax receipts of the Kingdom of Winter. Ohh, did she get it from the Disciple Merchant? It's even got the seal of the Minister of Finance."

The Hero: "Is it interesting?"

The Demon King: "It's very interesting. This GDP report is really amazing. As I expected, once you get rid of the heavy burden of having to constantly prepare for war, you can really make some gains."

The Hero: "The Three Kingdoms have been trying to deal with the massive influx of refugees and settlers recently. It seems that the Disciple Merchant and the Disciple Soldier have been cooperating on this matter."

The Demon King: "Yeah, the Elder Sister Maid wrote about that..."

The Hero: "What's up?"

The Demon King: "Even though they've been coming up with all of these special methods, it's still hard to say what the results of it will be. The idea of half-civilian, half-militia settlers in the Kingdom of Metal is very interesting. It's quite contrary to the idea of conscription. With regards to income, it's true that Public Corporations can indeed form the cornerstone of the industry, however, the big issue will be the productivity?"

The Hero: "What about it?"

The Demon King: "From an economic standpoint... It refers to the rate at which products are created."

The Hero: "Hmm."

The Demon King: "It's the Disciple Soldier's idea but for the time being, they are using all the refugees and the settlers as soldiers. This has the effect of restoring order while dealing with the short term problem of unemployment. It also has the effect of creating new settlements and constructing new infrastructure like roads."

The Hero: "Yeah, so it reduces crimes and at the same time develops some important structures, right? And all of this can be done simultaneously."

The Demon King: "That's right. You're catching on to things quicker than before."

The Hero: "That's because you talk about these sorts of things all the time."

The Demon King: "However, in the event that this continues, it could possibly lead to a state of negligence. The settlers may not find an incentive to working hard on their potato plantations, since whether or not they work hard, they will still receive a salary from the state from their being soldiers."

The Hero: "Yeah... Now that you say it."

The Demon King: "That's why at this rate, productivity rates are likely to fall. We may also have an issue of increasing corruption or the rigidity of social class. It's a state of social laziness caused by the devaluation of effort among the citizens."

The Hero: "Then, isn't this a stupid scheme? Shouldn't we put an end to it?"

The Demon King: "No, that's not it. Everything has its advantages and disadvantages. Like we said before, it's true that it has many advantages, especially for solving the problem we have at hand. With this many refugees coming in, the fact is that there isn't much arable land available. If we didn't do anything, people would die from hunger. In order to open up more land, we needed to build more settlements. Furthermore, increased organisation along military lines may have its productive benefits as well."

The Hero: "Hmm..."

The Demon King: "The Disciple Soldier has probably also already considered this, which is why he has established that they be relieved of service after five

years. After that, they will have to earn their living through their own hands. If we stop supporting them, a few will probably fail, but it's not a bad response. It's good to come up with new plans, but it's also important to correct and improve existing ones."

The Hero: "Demon King"

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "I'm sorry that you have to keep teaching me these things. I'm pretty bad at these sorts of things, so you must be fairly irritated with me."

The Demon King: "That's not true. Sometimes when my disciples don't listen to what I'm saying, I feel like stuffing them with black powder. Of course, I want to light the fuse too."

The Hero: "But you always seem happy to talk about your students."

The Demon King: "Really? I don't think so."

The Hero: "I think it's a good thing."

The Demon King: "Hmm."

The Hero: "Well, whatever. Hey."

The Demon King: "?"



Public Corporation: This refers to a company or an enterprise which is run by the government. Because it is not focused on making profits but rather providing services to the people, it is more capable of sustaining in the long-term. Furthermore, since it works for the good of the people, it can tolerate running into debts. However, there are many negative points, especially since employees perceive that they will still get paid

no matter how hard they work. This may lead to laziness and inefficiency.

The Hero: "Here."

The Demon King: "What is it? What is it?"

The Hero: "It's more custard pudding."

The Demon King: "Really... Mmm, it's delicious."

The Hero: "Would you like another one?"

The Demon King: "Sure."

The Hero: "That was fast."

The Demon King: "No point dawdling when there's good food to be had."

The Hero: "Mmm... Yummy."

The Demon King: "Yeah. This is really the best."

The Hero: "Shall we just eat half of it?"

The Demon King: "Why?"

The Hero: "It wouldn't be very nice to eat the Chief Maid's and the Female Paladin's share as well."

The Demon King: "Oh, that's right... But I want to eat more."

The Hero: "...? Hmm, you're right."

The Demon King: "Hero."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "Look, you've got some on your mouth, Hero."

The Hero: "You've got even more. You're really bad at this."

The Demon King: "I've got no choice. I'm lying down so it's not easy to eat."

The Hero: "I guess you don't. Here, ahhhh."

The Demon King: "Really? Ah, ah you don't have to! It's cool! But you don't have to if you don't want to! I can wait, right?!"

The Hero: "You don't want to eat?"

The Demon King: "No! I do! I do! I want to eat it eat all!"

The Hero: "What is going on."

The Demon King: "I want to eat!"

The Hero: "Y-yeah."

The Demon King: "...Mmm..."

The Hero: "Ahh... Umm, is it... that good?"

The Demon King: "Yeah, it's really sweet."

The Hero: "I see. Here, you've got some on your mouth."

The Demon King: "Wait!"

The Hero: "Huh?"

The Demon King: "The custard on your finger is mine."

The Hero: "?!"

The Demon King: "We're only allowed to eat half, so it's very precious. I'm not the kind of person who would go around breaking promises."

The Hero: "Uhh, yeah."

The Demon King: "Yumm. Bring some more when you come again."

The Hero: "G-got it..."

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "Nothing!"

The Demon King: "Really? I'm content. That was delicious."

The Hero: "Yes, yes."

The Demon King: "As expected, feeding me is something the Hero should do. My heart is pounding from something a close friend could never do for me."

The Hero: "Uhhh."

The Demon King: "What?"

The Hero: "Nothing. I'll go deliver some pudding to the Chief Maid."

Runs out.

The Demon King: "What a strange Hero."

----- The City of the Gate, the Hall of the Merchant's Union

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Thank you."

Union Merchant: "Don't worry about it."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I'm back."

Shrewd Accountant: "Welcome back. How is it?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "As expected, we came to the conclusion that the road must be built."

Union Merchant: "Infrastructure, eh."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hey! Dragon Lady!"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "It has been a while, Middle Aged Merchant."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Wow. In the short time since I've seen you, you've become really wonderful. These clothes and that blouse, are they from the Surface?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "They're more suited for movement and it's easier to conduct business in. The robes of the Dragon Tribe are beautiful, but they're all inked so it's very troublesome if they get dirty."

Union Merchant: "Hahahaha. It really suits you, Princess."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Eh? Why are you calling her princess?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Welcome back, Middle Ages Merchant, Milady."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I'm back. That's just a joke among the merchants here."

Shrewd Accountant: "You're a Lady, after all. It's not that much of a stretch to call you a princess."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Hmph. Don't think that'll put you on my good side."

Union Merchant: "More importantly, the list you requested is ready."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Thanks..."

Middle Aged Merchant: "What's this?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "It's the results of the census and quality of life survey which we've been conducting. We don't have guilds so it's hard to track the movement of talent. You merchants are very organised..."

Young Merchant: "Hey, welcome back."

Shrewd Accountant: "Councillor"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "You've come at a good time."

Middle Aged Merchant: "For me as well."

Young Merchant: "That was quick. You are both very hasty."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hahaha. Haste is a virtue for a merchant."

Young Merchant: "Some tea, if you will."

Union Merchant: "Right away."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Right, you start first."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yeah. First I've got a report. With regards to the construction of the bridges across the portal, we may be completing it earlier than expected. To begin with, we've increased the amount of manpower and by this week, a lot of the wooden bridges should already be constructed."

Young Merchant: "Very good. In that case, we should still have time to spare."

Middle Aged Merchant: "I would like to speak to you about what happens after."

Young Merchant: "Yeah, is this about the expansion of the projection and the construction of the full route?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Yes. How is it?"

Young Merchant: "Of course, we would like that to commence. However, we have to consider the time and monetary expenses incurred for an eight year project. If this was all borne by the Union, it could be very difficult."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Which is why I've come up with a new proposal."

Young Merchant: "Proposal?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "Look at this. This is a map of our observations of the portal."

Young Merchant: "Eh, what's this? A waterway? A canal?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "No, it's more like a sort of well."

Young Merchant: "Hmm."

Middle Aged Merchant: "In other words, you can look at this as a road for people and travellers to walk along, but you can also look at it as a sort of special, massive hole. That's what the architect said, anyway."

Young Merchant: "Mmhmm."

Middle Aged Merchant: "And that's what this slide-like well is for. Of course, we can't put fragile items on it, but sufficiently durable goods can be 'dropped' through it."

Young Merchant: "Eh?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "We drop it. They're tied to a cord and placed on a special platform."

Young Merchant: "Over such a great distance?! No matter how padded the thing is, it'll be smashed into bits."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Well, no actually. This is the place where that 'gravity' thing I talked to you about gets reversed. If we use this to our advantage, it will come to a point where it has no weight. Well, rather than saying it has no weight, the weight gets reversed? I'm not too sure about the specifics, but basically it will get to a point where the force works backwards and starts drawing it back to the centre, hence it will contribute to slowing down the speed of the object. Umm, you can think of it as gravity acting as the weight on a moveable pulley system."

Young Merchant: "Uhh."

Middle Aged Merchant: "On the other side, we can install a water wheel and use the force of the moving water to pull the goods up. The signal can be given using a polished metal disc as a reflector."

Young Merchant: "And exactly what effect will this have?"

Middle Aged Merchant: "We can really boost the efficiency. We'll need to have manpower stationed at the various intermediate points throughout the portal. The workflow will be similar to that in a mine. If we can establish this system,

even through the most difficult of routes we'll probably be able to safely deliver twenty caravans of goods a day."

Young Merchant: "Please further research this."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Will you provide the funds for the research?"

Young Merchant: "I'll get approval from the other merchants."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Please try to be quick about this. The old men in the Council of Ten might not be so receptive."

Young Merchant: "Sure."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Alright. I should get going then. There is work to be done."

Young Merchant: "Yes."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Let's meet again."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Sure, princess. We should have dinner some time."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I'm not a princess."

Middle Aged Merchant: "Hahahaha! Goodbye!"

Door closes.

Shrewd Accountant: "He's really invested in the whole bridges and roads building thing."

Young Merchant: "I've heard about this from some travelling merchants, but it seems he's found some incredible talent."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "At this rate, we'll soon have a splendid route going. I can see this route really bringing life to our trade."

Young Merchant: "Yeah. — Oh, you had something for me?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "As expected, we're having difficulties with establishing

the Northern Gate as the centre. That area was often attacked in the past, so much of it is in ruins now. It's probably about time for us to try and improve it, but we'll need to seek the opinions of the Self-Governing Council."

Young Merchant: "What sorts of plans do you have for it?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "As of now, I'm thinking of a Merchant's Quarter or a residential district."

Young Merchant: "Hmm..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "What do you think of the leaf-spring loaded horse carriages?"

Young Merchant: "Those are great inventions. They've really dramatically reduced the shaking on carriages."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "They're technological gifts from the Tribe of Automatons. They've expressed a proposal where we offer to them a district in the City in return for their continued assistance."

Young Merchant: "Oh."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "The Tribe of Automatons have had a long history of being oppressed. In order to prevent a repeat of that history, they've been working hard to improve their lot..."

Young Merchant: "I've also got some new movements I've been expecting."

The Fire Dragon Lady nods.

Young Merchant: "Have the Wheat Futures Certificates been concluded?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Yes, they've all been sold."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Wheat Futures Certificates? Is this about the wheat which you'd gathered throughout the spring? Are you letting them all go?"

Shrewd Accountant: "Yeah."

Young Merchant: "We've sold them all."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Why? Wasn't the point of buying all that weight to improve the situation in the Tripartite Union?"

Young Merchant: "I'm not really the guardian of their Economic Union."

Young Merchant: "Please think about this. Those Wheat Futures Certificates are very powerful weapons and they are really dangerous for the enemy. However, if as a consequence, the lords of the knights and armies are toppled economically, that is not what we are aiming to achieve at all. Of course, we should be prepared to accept large sacrifices in this economic attack but to sustain this much damage, we'll need money. It's already served its purpose."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Who are you selling it to?"

Young Merchant: "The Church. The one in the Central Continent."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "What?"

Young Merchant: "They're a target which can never be toppled. Of course, the Tripartite Union and countries friendly to them will continue to sell wheat to us, but in the end, our main business comes from countries affiliated with the Holy Church of Light."

Shrewd Accountant: "It's very good business."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Really?"

Young Merchant: "The big movement which I was speaking to you about is the exchange of old currency with new currency. At the time of this exchange, all of our liquid financial assets have been converted to these Wheat Futures Certificates. In other words, we don't have any of that now-worthless old currency."

Shrewd Accountant: "Now that we've sold off all of the Wheat Futures Certificates, we've made a lot of new currency. Thanks to that influx of new currency, we've managed to restore the financial reserves of the Union. — No, actually, they've been increased by a lot. Moreover, since the Church bought the Wheat Futures Certificates at such a high price, it will not be in their interest to

allow the price of wheat to fall. If they do that, they would lose a lot of money. In order to recoup their losses, they would need to sell it off at a high price as well but if they do that, then their own people will starve. In any case, it's their problem now."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "...How callous."

Young Merchant: "I will take that as a compliment."

Shrewd Accountant: "It's impossible getting a very detailed report but I can roughly tell you the results in general."

Young Merchant: "Mmm..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "How much have you made?"

Young Merchant: "Well, let's see... We've managed to change the exchange rate of the old currency to the new currency from three-to-one to four-to-one. That would put the price increase of the Wheat Futures Certificates at somewhere between seventy to fifty percent, not including the inflation of the certificates themselves..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Then you've... almost doubled your initial reserves?!"

Young Merchant: "Not by that much. It cost quite a bit to transport and maintain all those grain reserves. Furthermore, we had to buy quite a lot of potatoes from the Tripartite Union at a cost, so that cost quite a bit too."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yeah... that drained quite a bit."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "So you didn't make any profit?"

Young Merchant: "Don't be so downhearted."

Shrewd Accountant: "Hahahaha. The princess is so obsessed with profit, perhaps she is slowly transforming into a merchant of the Union herself."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "That's not true. I'm just quite interested in how you merchants can take a lousy pearl, grind it a bit, and sell it for some insane profit."

Young Merchant: "Well, we didn't double our initial capital but at the very least we've definitely made some profit. We've made about as much profit this year as the sum of the last four years."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Isn't that enough?"

Shrewd Accountant: "But the real treasure is not gold. Gold is just a tool."

Young Merchant: "Yes, of course. Now is the time to use that money to buy very valuable connections and business opportunities. You could say that the union has won this battle, but the business battle has just begun."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Who is your next target?"

Young Merchant: "Well, let's drink a toast first before we come to that."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Hahaha. Just make sure to keep me in the loop."

— — — The Village of Wintering, the Demon King's Manor

(— *We may be troublesome, but are you just going to hide us here all the time?*)

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Little Sister Maid: "Sis!"

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Little Sister Maid: "Hey! Hey!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah, what?"

Little Sister Maid: "Don't space out!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Sorry. What is it?"

Little Sister Maid: "There's a draft in the guestroom, we need to go take the linen."

Elder Sister Maid: "Oh, right. Sure."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah! Lalalala!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Hey..."

Little Sister Maid: "What?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Are you happy?"

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah! I'm really happy every day. I love our job!"

Elder Sister Maid: "I see."

Little Sister Maid: "It's warm, and the blankets are soft. Every day we have lots to eat, and the Mistress and the Chief Maid and the Hero and everyone is really nice to us, and I really love them."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see..."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah!"

Elder Sister Maid: "...Lalalala. ♪"

Little Sister Maid: "Get that side."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Little Sister Maid: "Stuff the sheets in nicely."

Elder Sister Maid: "Okay."

Slaps sheets.

Little Sister Maid: "All done!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Very good."

Little Sister Maid: "Ehehe. Ah!"

Elder Sister Maid: "What?"

Little Sister Maid: "I love you too. I love you the most."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah. I love you too."

Little Sister Maid: "That's good."

Elder Sister Maid: "Right, let's go wash up."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah!"

— — — — The Palace of Ice, the Audience Room

Knock knock.

Disciple Nobleman: "Good morning!" *Strolls around.*

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hey! In which part of the world does a courtier just nonchalantly stroll into the audience room of a palace."

Disciple Nobleman: "No, Your Majesty. You seem very beautiful today and I thought it would be a waste to be so rigid in your presence."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Oh?"

Door opens.

Envoy: "A pleasure to meet you, Your Majesty."

Disciple Nobleman: "This is an officer of the Kingdom of Red Horses. He is currently a marquis and my guest for this evening. This is my beloved Queen of the Kingdom of Ice and Snow."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Pleased to meet you, marquis. Please pardon my brusque courtier."

Envoy: "No, no, the Disciple Nobleman is a benefactor to our Kingdom for having brought together our esteemed Prince and the most beautiful flower of the land."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "I see."

Envoy: "My liege, the King of Red Gorses, has sent me to the Kingdom of Ice on a special mission to express our sincere gratitude for his actions. We are extremely grateful for his efforts."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hoho. Looks like you've done something quite impressive."

Disciple Nobleman: "No, no, it was merely the least of my duties."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "It is cold, envoy. You should have some hot liquor infused with the taste of apples. It is one of the things I am proud of in my country."

Envoy: "I have not heard of this wonder."

Disciple Nobleman: "Well, it's nothing legendary, but it's pretty good."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Indeed. Our Kingdom is but a country on the borders of the South. We do not have as refined manners as you from the Central Continent have. We are but a simple people."

Envoy: "No, no. It is clear that the Disciple Nobleman is a much finer connoisseur of the customs and literature of the Central Continent than many of the noble families."

Disciple Nobleman: "Oh no, it's just that you've been very kind in excusing my breaches of courtesy."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "He's a very rebellious person. Hohohoho."

Envoy: "I'm afraid I have to agree. Hahaha."

Disciple Nobleman: "Here you go, it's hot."

Envoy: "Thank you... Mmm, it's sweet and fragrant."

Disciple Nobleman: "The Queen is a connoisseur of wine herself."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “It's just something to pass the boredom of winter with.”

Envoy: “My Kingdom also produces some very fine fruit wines. I will be sure to send some to you.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “Thank you.”

Envoy: “Well. If I may begin on my proper suit...”

Disciple Nobleman: “Here we go.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “Why don't you state your terms.”

Envoy: “Yes. His Royal Majesty has decided. In view of the current massive shift in ideology, His Majesty has coolly reached the decision and would like to convey this decision to Her Majesty the Queen of Ice and Snow that our Kingdom wishes to become a part of the Tripartite Economic Union. Please consider this an official proclamation from our Kingdom.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “Thank you. It seems we have made a million allies. With this, we have taken yet another step towards establishing truly harmonious relations with the neighbouring states.”

Envoy: “At the same time, our Kingdom would like to recognise and thank the Disciple Nobleman and the Holy Order of the Lake for their cooperation in spreading the expertise to treating the recent outbreak of smallpox. We express our sincere gratitude to Your Majesty.”

Disciple Nobleman: “Oh.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “You did that?”

Disciple Nobleman: “I was just trying to help. Should I not have?”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “No, of course it's a good thing. But please stop springing these surprises on me.”

Envoy: “Ahahahaha.”

Disciple Nobleman: "But I didn't do any treatments. What we were doing was prevention, which is why we were seeing all those people who had yet to be infected."

Envoy: "No, that is more than enough. You have probably saved the lives of thousands, maybe tens of thousands of people, who would have succumbed to smallpox. We have no way to express the sincere gratitude in our hearts."

Disciple Nobleman: "He's just exaggerating."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Please thank the Holy Order and the Crimson Scholar."

Envoy: "On that matter..."

Disciple Nobleman: "?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "What do you mean?"

Envoy: "Well, it's the same with the potatoes and this time's smallpox treatment—I mean prevention, but the Holy Order of the Lake has helped us time and time again. The Holy Church has officially proclaimed the Holy Order of the Lake to be their enemies and have tried to cut off the lifeline between us but despite that, their assistance has been unwavering and integral. As a result, our country is fairly divided on the issue of which is the real Church."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "...I see."

Disciple Nobleman: "..."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Hey."

Disciple Nobleman: "Yes?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "You should go tell that girl to inform the Scholar."

Disciple Nobleman: "Of course I will. She's our very, very important classmate after all."

— — — The Village of Wintering, the Demon King's Manor

The Hero: "Okay. Here we are!"

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty, we have arrived."

The Demon King: "I know... Aww man. Now we have to walk for another ten minutes and my feet hurt."

The Female Paladin: "It's because you've been so lazy recently that your body has atrophied."

Elder Sister Maid: "Welcome back Mistress, Chief Maid!"

Little Sister Maid: "Welcome back Mistress, Chief Maid! Oh, and Hero! And Paladin!"

The Demon King: "Yeah, I'm back. You guys haven't changed a bit."

The Hero: "Here, let me open the door. First..."

The Demon King: "No bed."

The Chief Maid: "Okay, okay. Then how about... the living room?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes, it's nice and warm."

The Demon King: "Good. Let's go there."

Little Sister Maid: "I'll bring you a blanket."

The Female Paladin: "How spritely."

Elder Sister Maid: "She's been waiting for a very long time. Yesterday she was acting a bit weird but she's really excited about cooking for all of you. This manor is big and it does get a bit lonely with just the two of us."

— — — The Demon King's Castle, the Living Room

The Hero: "So it was just the two of them, eh?"

The Demon King: "I needed someone to take care of the place."

Elder Sister Maid: "Would you like to inspect our work later?"

The Chief Maid: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "Hmm, it's very cold outside."

The Female Paladin: "That's because you're still wearing nightclothes."

The Demon King: "I've got no choice. I'm not completely free yet."

Little Sister Maid: "Here's a blanket, Mistress."

The Demon King: "Thank you."

The Hero: "Ahh."

The Demon King: "As expected, this manor is the only place where I can relax, it's a long way away from the Castle. This room is always warm and nice."

The Hero: "How boisterous those two are."

The Chief Maid: "Hehehe."

Elder Sister Maid: "Would you like to look through the reports?"

The Demon King: "Yeah, I'll look through them."

The Hero: "Are you alright? Would you like to go to the study?"

Elder Sister Maid: "No, you don't have to go to the study, you can read it here. I've compiled all the scraps of the report."

The Demon King: "Thank you."

Elder Sister Maid: "Right, I'll bring it to you in a bit."

Little Sister Maid: "Well, would you like some tea? Should I also bring you

dinner? Are you hungry?"

The Demon King: "I'll be expecting it."

Little Sister Maid: "Ehehe."

The Female Paladin: "Yeah, then until dinner, I'll be at the Holy Order. It's been a long while since I went back, maybe a week."

The Demon King: "I'm sorry."

The Female Paladin: "Don't worry about it. You should just focus on getting better."

The Demon King: "Thank you."

The Hero: "..."

The Chief Maid: "What's up, Hero?"

The Hero: "Nothing. I just realised they've gotten very close."

The Demon King: "It wasn't like we had a bad relationship to begin with."

The Female Paladin: "That's right. Our relationship has never been bad."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Chief Maid: "You've got to stop worrying yourself with this sort of thing."

The Hero: "I see. I'm sorry."

The Female Paladin: "Hero, come with me to the Holy Order for a bit, won't you?"

— — The Village of Wintering, the Spring Road

Wind blowing.

The Female Paladin: "Ahh, the Dutch Clovers are in full bloom."

The Hero: "Yeah, it's a good day. The wind is a bit cold but the sun is still warming everything up."

The Female Paladin: "Everything is blooming and the green shoots are really poking out!"

The Hero: "Yeah. It's quite amazing how all of these are able to grow from under the snow."

The Female Paladin: "It's spring. I've always loved spring in this part of the world."

The Hero: "I always feel full of hope when I look at all this."

The Female Paladin: "Definitely."

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero: "..."

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero: "So, what's up?"

The Female Paladin: "Eh?"

The Hero: "I mean, you called me here. Is something up?"

The Female Paladin: "Umm."

The Hero: "Yeah?"

The Female Paladin: "Nothing."

The Hero: "Eh?!"

The Female Paladin: "I just want to walk together with you. Is that weird?"

The Hero: "No it's not, but—"

The Female Paladin: "It was very crowded back there. I just want to walk together with my Lord."

The Hero: "—"

The Female Paladin: "Don't make such a pained look."

The Hero: "Y-yeah..."

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "Well, it's not like I wanted to do anything. It's just that I thought it would be nice to walk along the tree-lined path leading to the Holy Order."

The Hero: "I see."

The Female Paladin: "I'm happy to be t-together with you."

The Hero: (She's acting really weird...)

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "Mmm."

The Hero: "What?"

The Female Paladin: "Even when push comes to shove, I've never been too good at talking. This is difficult."

The Hero: "You sure think of strange things."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Hero: "What a nice spring. The wind is blowing so gently, it's almost like the war doesn't even exist. Isn't that great?"

The Female Paladin: "Yeah. — And our meals look like they're almost ready too..."

The Hero: "What is up?"

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "Hey, Lord."

The Hero: "?!"

The Female Paladin: "What's with that face?"

The Hero: "No. What's with that 'Lord' thing. Can you stop? It's making me feel word. Please stop."

The Female Paladin: "Oh. I thought it would be okay if it was just the two of us."

The Hero: "Please forgive me."

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "Well, Hero."

The Hero: "What?"

The Female Paladin: "..."

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "Well... Don't I deserve some praise?"

The Hero: "Eh?"

The Female Paladin: "Here. I've been working really hard to heal the injuries of you two people, right? I've got things I want too."

The Hero: "Eh? What do you mean?"

The Female Paladin: "Come on."

The Hero: "Yeah. Well, you can't ask me for that. Even though I'm really grateful to you and you've helped me out a lot. This time you really saved me. Thank you."

The Female Paladin: "That's not what I mean, something purer."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "...Even if you say that."

The Female Paladin: "Mmm."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "...Umm... Well... Yeah."

Wind blows.

The Female Paladin: "—Ahaha."

The Hero: "What a weird person."

The Female Paladin: "No, no, my Lord."

The Hero: "Stop that."

The Female Paladin: "To protect your life, I have pledged to be your loyal shield and armour. Today, I renew this pledge."

Chapter 4, “I love the both of you.”

——— The Holy Empire, the Octagonal Palace

Holy Imperial General: “The points on this map denote the new Villages of the Children of Light.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Hmm.”

Military Strategist: “We've achieved almost 80% of our target.”

Holy Imperial General: “However, there appears to be a rumour spreading.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “That was within the scope of our calculations. We don't really need the rumours to be spreading, but we can just leave it as it is for now. At least they'll help to increase interest in the project.”

Holy Imperial General: “Yes.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Hmm... However, now that we're on this, the next problem is the production of gunpowder.”

Military Strategist: “Saltpetre, your Highness.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Can we procure more from the Kingdom of Copper?”

Military Strategist: “Yes. I have already sent people to secure that.”

Holy Imperial General: “But should we really be placing so much emphasis on these muskets? From what I can tell, the reload rate is fairly slow and the effective distance is not very far either. Their penetrative power is not bad, but a magical battalion has far more destructive power at their disposal, right?”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Hehehehe. Hahahaha.”

Holy Imperial General: “Your Highness...?”

Crown Prince Marshal: “No, no, you are correct. These are not particularly powerful weapons. It is as you say. However, that is because you only consider

the battle to take place on the battlefield.”

Military Strategist: “Indeed.”

Holy Imperial General: “...The battle is outside of the battlefield?”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Think about it. Look at all these countries in the Central Continent. Let's assume there is a war, what would the noblemen do? First, they would issue a mustering order to their vassal knights. If these knights have other vassal knights, then they can muster them, their families, and any other soldiers. This will go on, all the way until nobody has any more subordinates. No matter how strong the noblemen are, even the royalty will issue mustering orders and their subordinate noblemen will ride to their banner. There are a few systems but this is more or less the same across the board. In other words, this is a military organisational problem. If we merely rely on mustering orders, then we miss out on a large portion of the population who could be in the army. Of course, when it comes to things like riding horses, it takes a specific skillset, and apart from those in the Kingdom of Red Horses, where they are the local product, we can't expect those villages to be able to procure Warhorses. Another way to put it, in the Central Continent, people who are prepared to fight = people who can ride and own warhorses = people who are rich enough to afford the training and equipment = people of the social status of knight and above, or people related to them.”

Holy Imperial General: “I-I see.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “The exception are mercenaries. These people have given their lives to battle, so they're different. There are many reasons why this is so, but the biggest reason is that learning the techniques which allow you to be effective in a war requires a long time. For example, I, or for that matter, you, have been waving your sword around since you were old enough to hold one.”

Holy Imperial General: “Yeah. I was the son of a knight, and my father taught me to use a sword.....”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Yes, that's the reality of the countries of the Central Continent.”



Warhorse: A horse which has received the specific battle training to endure the loud sounds and stench of blood on the battlefield. Well-trained horses are capable of charging directly into a sharp wall of enemy spears and some can even be taught to stomp and bite the enemy. Breeding a warhorse requires a lot of time and money and as a result, only knights and those of higher social classes can afford them.

Holy Imperial General: “...”

Crown Prince Marshal: “That's the issue of swordsmanship. You must also consider the issue of horsemanship. Being able to ride a horse is one thing, but how long does it take to learn how to fight from the back of a horse? It's the same for bows. It's true that a well-trained longbowman can probably fire ten times faster than a musket with twice the range, but that requires long years of training and practice.”

“Moreover, the ability to use a bow effectively is very dependent on your physical condition. It is common knowledge that the ability to make an arrow go very far with significant penetrative ability is largely dependent on the strength of the individual. However, with a bullet propelled by black powder, we can expect even a woman or a child to have the same amount of power. Magical division? Out of the question. Each one of them requires twenty years of dedicated training and study.”

Holy Imperial General: “That is indeed true.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “The fact is that all the weapons that we humans have been using up till now have required an enormous amount of time to train before reaching a level where they can be used practically in battle. A knight takes about 15 years to train. A squire maybe 10 years. A mage will take 20 years. A mercenary is likely to have spent more time on the battlefield than any

knight. They flit from battlefield to battlefield so they may reach their peak after just five years, even though most of them die before that.”

“Spending time training soldiers means spending money on their upkeep. Very few people are willing to subject themselves to such training, so the price is likely to be quite high. It is because we use such expensive knights that our country is unable to field an exceptionally large army. Even as the Holy Empire, we may only have a standing army of 2,500 knights. Any manpower above that will require a mustering order from the nobility. Such a method of gathering troops will depend on the opinions of the vassal noblemen and the speed of their mobilisation. If supplies of rations get cut off, morale will crash almost instantly.”

Military Strategist: “Correct. That is the reason why the previous expedition failed.”

Holy Imperial General: “I understand.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “As for muskets...”

Cocks musket.

Holy Imperial General: “Their effectiveness, rather than being compared to bows, is more similar to crossbows. A musket is easier to aim and produces a larger sound than a crossbow. If it hits its target, it is capable of penetrating even metal armour. Moreover, the training time required is exceptionally short. Even a peasant levy will be able to learn its use in months and take to the field as elite soldiers.”

Holy Imperial General: “Training time...”

Crown Prince Marshal: “You could say that is the only advantage, but it would still be the key to changing everything. With these muskets, fighting a war on continuous resources will be much less expensive. With muskets and suitable training, we can change the entire face of battle. We can throw a nearly inexhaustible supply of peasants onto the battlefield. Compared to other infantry men, these peasants who have been used to a life of poverty and hardship are much more capable of walking longer distances every day, even more so than the noblemen. Longbows can shoot faster than muskets? In that case, I just need to field ten times more musketeers than longbowmen. Cavalry

have more charge attack? In that case, I just need to field ten times more musketeers than cavalrymen. Noblemen have more battle spirit? In that case, I just need to field ten times more musketeers than noblemen. All of this is possible because of the musket. If we can kill one enemy soldier, it will take them 5-10 years to train another soldier of a similar calibre. On the other hand, if they kill one of our soldiers, we will be able to replenish him in a matter of months."

Military Strategist: "But there are other disadvantages."

Crown Prince Marshal: "I will leave you to work out the logistics of the gunpowder."

Military Strategist: "—Understood."

Holy Imperial General: "It sounds wonderful. This is a very scary invention, how should I say it..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Of course, it comes with many disadvantages. With us fielding this many people, they will require a lot of food, without which we will already begin to incur many casualties."

Military Strategist: "Yes."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Furthermore, once we fire one volley, it will take time to load the next round into the musket. In that interval, we will be practically defenceless against the enemy."

Military Strategist: "Correct."

Crown Prince Marshal: "However, if I only had a frontline commander who could deal with these problems, it is no mistake to say that the Musketeer Companies will be the strongest throughout the land."

Military Strategist: "If only we had the Black General..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "It is useless to dwell on dead people. That mischievous old general disappeared after getting involved in a scandal at the palace."

Holy Imperial General: "The Hero of the Seven Miles?"

Crown Prince Marshal: “That is an old story.”

Military Strategist: “The Grey King of the Kingdom of the Mist once challenged our forces. With a few words of advice, he was able to turn the situation around.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Hmph. I once considered using him at the frontlines and taking command of the army myself.”

Military Strategist: “Hahaha. It is a long time to the summer.”

Holy Imperial General: “I shall speed up the construction of the Villages of Light.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “I'm counting on you. The Holy Empire shall rule over the Continent.”

— — — The Village of Wintering, the Manor of the Demon King, Late at Night in the Central Courtyard

(—*The world is big and without end. Here there are countless people, some are heartless and evil but some are kind and beautiful, every single type of existence is possible.*)

Swish!

Elder Sister Maid: “!”

Clang! Swoosh!

Elder Sister Maid: “—!”

Swing! Whoosh!

Elder Sister Maid: “Hah!”

Swing!

Elder Sister Maid: “... Pant... Pant...”

Swing!

Elder Sister Maid: “Heh!”

—*Clunk*

Elder Sister Maid: “!”

The Female Paladin: “Ah, it's me.”

Elder Sister Maid: “...Female Paladin.”

The Female Paladin: “Did I scare you?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Ah. No.”

The Female Paladin: “This is the sword that the Disciple Soldier used to use a long time ago, right? I think it's too heavy for you.”

Elder Sister Maid: “But I'm used to it already.”

The Female Paladin: “I see. Well, I guess it's something you can get used to. — When did you start?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Since last autumn.”

The Female Paladin: “A year...”

Elder Sister Maid: “—”

The Female Paladin: “Show me what you know.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Alright.”

The Female Paladin: “...”

Elder Sister Maid: “.....”

The Female Paladin: “Don't make such a troubled face. I won't tell anyone.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yeah...”

The Female Paladin: “It's this sort of era. Everyone should know a few self-protection techniques.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yeah.”

The Female Paladin: “But you don't really have the physical strength. You've got to use your legs more. If you hold the sword so far away, you do increase your power, but your body will be forced to swing in the opposite direction. In that situation, you won't be able to avoid the enemy's attacks.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Is that... so...?”

The Female Paladin: “Yeah.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Use my legs...”

The Female Paladin: “Bend your knees more... Yeah.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yeah... Like... this?”

The Female Paladin: “Turn your body so you hide it in the shadow of your sword. Strike towards the head of the enemy, steady your blade. Pretend that there is another sword in between you and your opponent. Practice moving backwards, forwards, and sideways. Your wrist strength is enough for now. You probably don't have the strength to cut through a suit of armour, but without armour, your current strength should be sufficient.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes...”

The Female Paladin: “Listen to the sound of your breath, don't transfer your weight to the heel of your foot.”

Elder Sister Maid: “...Yes!”

Swing!

The Female Paladin: “Good.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes.”

The Female Paladin: "You don't really have to do too much. Jumping around, flying all over the place, and shining laser beams of destruction all over the place is only possible if you're of the same class as the Hero. Try not to shake your body too much and don't jump around without purpose. Above all, you need to calm down."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

The Female Paladin: "Alright, go on."

Swing! Swish!

Elder Sister Maid: "Hah!"

The Female Paladin: "..."

Swing!

Elder Sister Maid: "... Hah... Hah..."

The Female Paladin: "Good. Stretch out your wrist more."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Female Paladin: "Steel your chest and breathe slowly."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Umm... Can I ask something?"

The Female Paladin: "What?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Should normal peasants be allowed to hold swords..."

The Female Paladin: "The Holy Order does not think about such pointless things. Do you think they should?"

Elder Sister Maid: "...Yes."

The Female Paladin: "It's late... I wish you the best of dreams, Elder Sister Maid."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you very much."

— — — **In a Bar in a Nameless Settlement**

~♪ ~～♪

Disciple Bard: "～♪ ...♪"

Elderly Settler: "..."

Drunk Villager: "...Ahh, that was great!"

Innkeeper's Daughter: "That was amazing."

Innkeeper: "Ohh, lady, that was a good song. Have a glass on the house. And if you feel up to it, play another song!"

Disciple Bard: "Of course!"

Elderly Settler: "Ms. Bard, I ain't never seen such an instrument before."

Disciple Bard: "This is a Dragonshead Fiddle. It's got a sweet sound, doesn't it?"

Elderly Settler: "Yeah, it's a very pleasant sound."

Drunk Villager: "For a bard to stop by a nondescript village like ours, you must just be stopping by to let us hear a little bit."

Innkeeper: "Indeed."

Disciple Bard: "Oh, really?"

Elderly Settler: "You mustn't be from around here, miss. That's some beautiful golden hair you've got there."

Drunk Villager: "There's a country called the Kingdom of Ice two kingdoms away. That place is filled with bards and minstrels. The Palace is really good to these

artists and the city streets are like music halls. Since winter is the season of music, bards from all over the world gather at the Kingdom of Ice each winter.”

Innkeeper: “Registered minstrels often come under private sponsors once their skills become recognised enough. When they have sponsors, they'll stay with them for years. That's why there are live-in bards and even bards hired as private music teachers in the Kingdom of Ice. Since there are so many people there, it is known as the Home of the Bards. Most of the bards throughout the land have spent some time there, it's a very festive mood.”

Disciple Bard: “Ehh! I've come from a very long way. Apart from this Home of the Bards, is there any other place famous for its music or instruments?”

Elderly Settler: “Hmm, let me think.”

Drunk Villager: “Hmm.”

Innkeeper: “Well, if it's about music, there are two.”

Disciple Bard: “Two?”

Innkeeper: “The first is the music of the bards. My niece has been to the Kingdom of Ice before so she's more familiar with that.”

Disciple Bard: “Thank you. I've collected my skills in music, poetry, and playwriting before coming here!”

Innkeeper: “I see, I see! Then let me tell you something. But in return, you've got to stay the night. I'll charge you a good price. And you can let the other customers listen to the music of foreign lands.”

Disciple Bard: “Sure!”

Innkeeper: “Right. First is the music of the bards. At pubs and festivals.... Well, on the streets and in the shrines, we've got a different kind of music. It's light and fun and rowdy. I love it. The popular ones get transmitted by bards as they roam through the countries.”



Dragonshead Fiddle: This is modelled after the Mongolian Horsehead Fiddle (*morin khuur*) without a horse head but rather with a dragonhead. A horsehead fiddle is a bowed instrument, like a violin, which has only two strings, and the scroll is usually carved in the form of a horse's head.

Disciple Bard: “Is it like a chorus?”

Elderly Settler: “What's a chorus?”

Disciple Bard: “Well, umm, is it sung?”

Innkeeper: “Yeah. Musical instruments are played and it's sung along to. From time to time you get just one of them, but that's not really very common. The musical instruments, well... I ain't never seen anything like your Dragonshead Fiddle, but the most common are lutes, rebecs, gitterns, lyres, those sorts of instruments.”

Disciple Bard: “Hmm, I would like to see that.”

Innkeeper: “There is one more type of music, and that's church music.”

Disciple Bard: “Church?”

Innkeeper: “In order to give praise to the Spirit, the Church plays some holy music every day. Most of us can sing at least a few hymns. We don't have any in a small village like ours, but big cities tend to have Holy Choir Brigades.”

Disciple Bard: “Holy Choir Brigades?”

Innkeeper: “That's right. There's been a bunch of really talented singers among the latest group of faithful. Most are young boys and girls. The voices of children

are much purer and clearer so when you get them to sing altogether, the music produced is something out of this world. Unlike bards, church musicians don't need to move around very much so they can use some really huge instruments. Sometimes they even use instruments as big as entire sheds."

Innkeeper's Daughter: "Sheds?!"

Disciple Bard: "By sheds, do you mean those houses where they keep the farming implements?"

Innkeeper: "That's the one. They're as big as small houses, really."

Innkeeper's Daughter: "What!"

Disciple Bard: "How surprising."

Elderly Settler: "It's true."

Innkeeper: "Furthermore, since bards usually travel alone, they don't like to use instruments that require their mouths. Otherwise, they won't be able to sing along."

Innkeeper's Daughter: "Now that you say it, I haven't really seen many bards with flutes."

Disciple Bard: "I see."

Innkeeper: "Instruments like the *fife* or the *musette*, which resemble flutes, are commonly used in the church. Of course, there will be bards who are capable of using them as well."

Disciple Bard: "I know fifes..."

Looks around.

Disciple Bard: "These, right?"

Elderly Settler: "Ahh, I've seen this."



Lute: A stringed instrument commonly used in Europe during the Middle Ages. Like a guitar, the strings are plucked with fingers. The body is shaped like a pear which has been cut into half. The front is flat but it has a rounded back.

be played with a bow.

Gittern: A medieval instrument also known as the *citole*. It also looks like a violin and was plucked by finger.

Fife: A woodwind instrument, but played vertically rather than horizontally. It is a relative of the flute and the piccolo.

Musette de Cour: A type of bagpipe. It is used as an oboe but produces a higher pitch sound.

Drunk Villager: "My grandpa played this at festivals."

Innkeeper: "That's right. The shape isn't really the same, but it's a fife. Can you play this too?"

Disciple Bard: "Of course."

Drunk Villager: "Let me hear a song, miss!"

Innkeeper: "Would you?"

Disciple Bard: "Of course. It's no trouble."

~♪ ~~~♪

Disciple Bard: “～♪ ～～♪”

Elderly Settler: “Ahh, how beautiful.”

Drunk Villager: “Indeed.”

Innkeeper: “I've never seen such a skilled bard.”

Innkeeper's Daughter: “Yeah, she's incredibly good! It's almost as if a bird had flown down from heaven...”

— — — — The Winter Palace, the Strategy Room

Disciple Merchant: “Hey. Hey.”

Assistant: “Yes.” *Scampers over.*

Disciple Merchant: “What are you doing?”

Assistant: “I'm tidying up the records and cleaning up the books.”

Disciple Merchant: “Alright. Good.”

Assistant: “Hehe.”

Disciple Merchant: “Everyone's been working like crazy.”

Assistant: “Work has been insane.”

Disciple Merchant: “Is it really that crazy? You just sit there the whole day.”

Assistant: “It's because I sit here the whole day that it's so crazy. There're not a lot of people who can do this sort of work in this country.”

Disciple Merchant: “Is that so?”

Assistant: “Yes.”

Disciple Merchant: “You don't seem to be fazed by that.”

Assistant: "I don't really have anywhere else to go..."

Disciple Merchant: "I see. I see."

Assistant: "Hehe."

Disciple Merchant: "In that case, I'll think of something for you to do."

Assistant: "What?!"

Disciple Merchant: "Relax. A frog will die instantly if it is put in boiling water, but if you slowly increase the temperature of the water, then it can live for quite longer, right?"

Assistant: "Wait, are you thinking of something terrible?"

Disciple Merchant: "Not at all."

Assistant: "Uhhhhhhh."

Disciple Merchant: "Don't be so bothered. Make me a cup of tea first."

Assistant: "Yes."

Runs off.

Assistant: "Alright, let's take a look at the work you've done. Let's see. You've done a great job on the accounts. This memo... Haha. You've written down everything you don't understand... so that you can ask questions later? You're learning well. How nostalgic. Good job."

Flip flip.

Disciple Merchant: "Hmm."

"The potato is extremely delicious. It's so good that you can never stop at just one, which is sad... Which is why we need to produce more potatoes."

Disciple Merchant: "...What are you thinking about?"

"Today, a servant girl gave me a pastry made from eggs. She asked me out for

dinner, but because I was afraid, I ran away. Sorry.”

Disciple Merchant: “...What is this?”

Assistant: “The tea is here.”

Disciple Merchant: “Good job!”

Assistant: “Really!”

Closes book.

Disciple Merchant: “Not bad.”

Assistant: “Thank you.”

Disciple Merchant: “Then shall we deal with the issue of the census records?”

Assistant: “Right, I've cleared all the census accounts.”

Disciple Merchant: “Very good. So what is your estimate?”

Assistant: “Estimate...?”

Disciple Merchant: “Yeah. How much money do you think we'll get?”

Assistant: “Surely that's just small change.”

Disciple Merchant: “It may seem that way, but in the Kingdom of Winter, the country's main revenues come from tax receipts, right? A large proportion of that comes directly from the taxation of production and currency transfers. This comes roughly twice every year: spring and autumn. In other words, while this is a source of income, if we use this without planning, we won't have enough money to last us through the next season and we'd end up starving. We've got to carefully plan our spending. That's quite important, right?”

Assistant: “Yes it is... But if it's so important, why haven't we done anything about it up till now?”

Disciple Merchant: “Because the scale has been so small. You need to have the

acumen of a merchant.”

Assistant: “?”

Disciple Merchant: “It also increases the amount of work you need to do. The Kingdom of Winter, for many years, has been a mercenary country receiving food and monetary aid from the central Continent. There were a lot of settlers but those were mainly comprised of risk-takers with nothing to lose, those whom had hoped to avoid the heavy taxation in the Central Continent. At the time, to survive properly in the country, it would require a large gamble on the part of each individual. But now we have potatoes. Because of the potatoes, the population can increase and we can escape from the binds of the curse set on us by the Central Continent. That is how the Southern United Kingdoms were able to plan for independence.”

“Up till now, in this time of strife, the Central Continent's wallet has been bleeding due to various incidents. This has exacerbated the situation, which is why we now have to deal with this in this manner.”

Assistant: “So it's kind of like when the father leaves the house and the brother assumes his responsibilities?”

Disciple Merchant: “That's a good analogy.”

Assistant: “Hehehe.”

Disciple Merchant: “Because of the Tripartite Economic Union, the Kingdom of Winter has managed to achieve some splendid gains in production. However, it's clear that there are some limitations to the union. We can easily gain metal products from the Kingdom of Metal, but every year our need for wood increases. Our kingdoms have quite a few forests but even these have limitations. On top of that, we also lack horses and brass, spices, and textiles.”

Assistant: “...”

Disciple Merchant: “Well, for all of these, what we will require is help. The merchants can basically ship in anything that we need.”

Assistant: “Then what should I do?”

Disciple Merchant: "That's your job. To figure out what it is that you should do."



*E
x
p
l
a
n
a
t
i
o
n*

Brass: An alloy created from the fusion of copper and zinc, which was produced in very large quantities around the 17th century. The standard ratio is 65% copper and 35% zinc, but sometimes the amount of copper is more or less. The more copper there is, the redder the brass becomes; the less copper there is, the whiter the brass becomes. When more than 40% is zinc, the metal takes on a metallic sheen similar to gold and is hence often used as a replacement. A very close-to-home example of the usage of brass would be the 5 yen coin. Most gold-coloured instruments like trumpets are also made from brass.

Assistant: "Ummm. Ummm."

Disciple Merchant: "What's the most important thing?"

Assistant: "...Greetings?"

Disciple Merchant: "That's the first thing you do when you meet someone."

Assistant: "Yes."

Disciple Merchant: "And then?"

Assistant: "Umm... And then, a meal?"

Disciple Merchant: "Right. Food. If it's about that, then potatoes should be fine. Also, the amount of livestock has increased as well, particularly pigs which are being reared in large numbers by the farmers. You must also consider the balance of wheat and barley production. Then you should consider the

production of dairy and fruits. And what's next?"

Assistant: "Umm, if you don't produce or buy the things you want, then you can't get them."

Disciple Merchant: "Very good. You're learning fast."

Assistant: "Ehehe."

Disciple Merchant: "Using money to buy the things is very easy, especially when we've already come up with estimates of what we will require. But if we just do the easy things, we'll run out of money rapidly. The most important thing to consider is cost-effectiveness. For example, there are many doubts within the statement, 'We need to buy dairy products!'"

Assistant: "Really?"

Disciple Merchant: "Well, to begin with, we should of course question if the money we're paying is worth the value of the good, but there are a few other things we should consider as well. First, the word 'need.'"

Assistant: "Need?"

Disciple Merchant: "A need should be considered something that we would die without, right? If you think about it this way, there aren't actually a lot of things that we need. If you don't take care of such things, then you'll think that you need everything and end up using a lot of money for these. That's the first thing."

Assistant: "Yes."

Disciple Merchant: "The second important point is to consider, 'What could I do with the same sum of money?'"

Assistant: "...?"

Disciple Merchant: "Don't get it? Alright, let's assume you've got no food to eat at home."

Assistant: "That's sad."

Disciple Merchant: "Then buy some bread!"

Assistant: "Bread is delicious! Buy some bread!"

Disciple Merchant: "Good. But before its taste, if you don't eat bread, you'll starve to death. So bread is a 'need.'"

Assistant: "It's a need."

Disciple Merchant: "So you've bought bread. Buy another one!"

Assistant: "Yes!"

Disciple Merchant: "But at that price, you could have bought two sacks of potatoes, right?"

Assistant: "...?"

Disciple Merchant: "Right? See, so when you say something like 'Buy some bread!', you can't just focus on the bread. That's because money is limited. When you're making plans for how to use your money, if you don't consider the specifics of everything, then you're going to make a mistake. Two sacks of potatoes are much more filling than two loaves of bread, right? That's why saying things like 'We should buy bread!' or 'It would be weird if we didn't buy bread!' or 'We can't eat money. This is not a problem of money. Not buying bread would be akin to murder!' is false. We must consider that there are other ways to save lives using the same amount of money."

Assistant: "Yes."

Disciple Merchant: "This shows us that the question 'Should we buy bread?' is not really the issue at hand. The real issue is trying to find out 'Why do we need this thing?' or 'Out of all these things that we want, which one should we prioritise?' and 'How do we get the goods we want at a cheaper price? How do we get more of it?'"

Assistant: "How very complicated..."

Disciple Merchant: "Well, think through this slowly. If you don't understand, you should ask someone who does."

Assistant: "Yes..."

Disciple Merchant: "So the real question isn't 'Should we or should we not buy bread?' but rather 'What sort of food should we buy?' or 'What should we do to feed everyone in a healthy manner?'"

Assistant: "...Yeah, I understand,"

Disciple Merchant: "Right. Now for your homework..."

Assistant: "What?!"

Disciple Merchant: "The Kingdom of Winter would like to produce more dairy products. More precisely, rather than milk, we need cheese. This is a matter of storage. Have you eaten cheese before?"

Assistant: "Yes!"

Disciple Merchant: "Then I want you to study it. I want everybody to be eating cheese, and I want us to spend as little money as possible. Think of a way."

Assistant: "Hmmm."

Disciple Merchant: "You must carefully consider our goals."

Assistant: "A hint. Give me a hint."

Disciple Merchant: "I wouldn't have something like that. There's no right answer."

Assistant: "In that case, what would you do?"

Disciple Merchant: "I haven't thought about it so I don't know. But I guess... we could buy cheese in large quantities from foreign countries and sell them to everyone in the Kingdom of Winter."

Assistant: "Then let's do that!"

Disciple Merchant: "That method would surely fail. Such a method wouldn't even make 10% of what needs to be done."

Assistant: “...”

Disciple Merchant: “Right. Now that I've given you your homework, it's time to work out today's accounts.”

Assistant: “Yes, Disciple Merchant!”

— — — The Manor in the Village of Wintering, the Study

The Demon King: “Where are the studies on the crop rotation issues the Order did for us?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Here they are.”

Clatter clatter!

The Demon King: “Ugh.”

The Chief Maid: “Well, well, are you alright?”

The Demon King: “Sorry, I've knocked over all these reports.”

The Chief Maid: “I'll get it cleaned up in a bit.”

The Demon King: “My right arm is so incapable of moving properly so I'm really clumsy.”

The Chief Maid: “Well, it's all bandaged up. Just endure it.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Here are the letters we received today.”

The Demon King: “Hmm, just confirm them for me.”

The Chief Maid: “This is the salary from the Lone Winter King?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yeah.”

The Demon King: “What? I'm some kind of titular honorary nobleman now?”

The Chief Maid: "You're a type of marquis. You're in an advisory position. You will receive a stipend four times a year for your service."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's in the treasury, right?"

The Demon King: "Is it? I never noticed."

The Chief Maid: "Well, you may be an economist, but you have a very thin attachment to money."

The Demon King: "Why would I develop an attachment to something like currency?"

The Chief Maid: "Well, well, even if it's the object of your research..."

The Demon King: "The object of my research is the advancement of the economy in order to create a more harmonious society between people. And of course, also to establish an independent financial infrastructure in this area. Umm..."

The Chief Maid: "What is it?"

The Demon King: "Well, uhh... This is weird."

Elder Sister Maid: "Hehehe. Are you looking for the minutes of the Conference of the Tribe or the plans for the Nine Tribes? They're here."

The Demon King: "That's the one!"

The Chief Maid: "Hehehe."

The Demon King: "Well. Even without me, the Demon Race is still the Demon Race."

Flip.

The Demon King: "Hmm. Rebuilding the roads. The previous wars have really destroyed many of the bridges."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Chief Maid: “Bridges?”

The Demon King: “In many cases, bridges are important choke points in times of war. Traffic often necessarily passes through them. As a result, they are important in deciding the speed of troops. For this reason, even though it's better for bridges to be built out of stone, they are often specially built out of wood so that in times of crisis they can be easily burnt.”

The Chief Maid: “For the bridges to be rebuilt, that means that peace has been agreed to at least temporarily.”

The Demon King: “Correct. Even though we're still left with the issue of the Demons of the Pale...”

The Chief Maid: “That's going to take some time...”

Elder Sister Maid: “Umm...”

The Demon King: “What is it?”

The Chief Maid: “...?”

Elder Sister Maid: “No. Umm.”

The Demon King: “What is it? Are you feeling unwell?”

The Chief Maid: “—”

Elder Sister Maid: “No, um. I'll go get some tea.”

The Demon King: “Yeah, please.”

Runs off.

The Chief Maid: “—”

— — — **The Holy Empire, a Secret Metal Factory**

Clang! Clang!

Production Supervisor: “Raise the temperature! More kindling!”

Worker: “Yes!”

Production Supervisor: “Stop slacking off! You want your meals to get cut?!”

Clang! Clang!

Production Supervisor: “Don't stop with the furnace! Keep going!”

Worker: “Ahh... Ahh...”

Worker: “Hot... water...”

Production Supervisor: “Just a bit more to your rest! Work! Work!”



Furnace: A facility required for the production of metal. The oldest metal melting furnaces were produced in China in ancient times. The first modern furnace was constructed in England in the 12th century.

Clang! Clang!

Head Craftsman: “The work is going well. Alright, now we can create some really high purity metals. Just from this, the quality will go up.”

Engineer: “I see.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “How is it? How's the production?”

Head Craftsman: "Well, we should be able to fulfil our monthly quota of 800 muskets."

Holy Imperial General: "If you can, then we would have stockpiled more than 5,000."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Too slow. Can we make them any faster?"

Head Craftsman: "That would cause problems with quality..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Hmm, and what about the cannone?"

Head Craftsman: "That is going on well, the non-defective yield is very good. We're producing at the pace of two a month."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Looks like there's no issue with the cannone."

Head Craftsman: "Well, it's because we've been using *The Genius' Manuscript*."

Knock knock.

Head Craftsman: "You can come in."

Engineer: "Did you call?"

Experienced Technician: "I came as fast as I could."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Who are those people?"

Head Craftsman: "*The Genius' Manuscript* that you handed to me has a lot of sketches and notes written on it. Muskets and cannones were experimental products. It's a bit too early to reproduce them but there are many other designs apart from these."

Crown Prince Marshal: "I know. I gave you the instructions after all."

Head Craftsman: "Yes. It's quite scary."

Crown Prince Marshal: "So, what about them?"

Engineer: "Well..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "I don't mind. I respect the views of other qualified and talented individuals. You may answer freely, so tell me in detail."

Engineer: "In that case..."

Experienced Technician: "First of all, *The Genius' Manuscript* is brilliant. It's almost like a blessing from the Spirit of Light himself! Most of the entries are written about in detail and the rest are sketched out so you can get an idea of it right away!"

Engineer: "Yes. Beginning with the muskets, a lot of different observations are written here."

Experienced Technician: "For example, we pulled this charcoal-like rock from the ground, and it burns."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Hmm, that's from the North, right?"

Engineer: "*The Genius' Manuscript* details how to steam these rocks at an appropriate temperature to produce something known as Coke. Using this coke, we can produce a stronger metal than usual."

Experienced Technician: "Furthermore, *The Genius' Manuscript* also has this sketch. I've enlarged it and cleaned it up a bit."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Is this... a percussion hammer?"

Experienced Technician: "Your Highness, I had no idea you were so familiar with muskets?!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "How could I not be familiar with the weaponry of the soldiers I lead myself?"

Experienced Technician: "Wow! Amazing! Then allow me to explain. This appears to show an improvement to the musket, it may perhaps be its very successor."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Hmm."



Cannone: Italian for cannon. It was used primarily throughout the 16th century as a smoothbore cannon with direct fire. This means that the weapon was aimed directly at the enemy.

Non-Defective Yield: The ratio of non-defective goods to totally produced goods. If there are no defective goods, then the non-defective yield will be 100%, but in reality, defective goods are far more common. As an industrial standard, in most cases a 95% non-defective yield is superb.

Coke: If coke is burnt on a metal furnace, higher temperatures can be reached, resulting in a purer metal. Furthermore, carbon produced during the burning of coke can mix with the liquid metal, resulting in carbonisation that can create a stronger metal, further creating steel from iron. Coke was first used by the Chinese circa 200BC and was heavily used in Europe beginning from the 18th century.

Experienced Technician: “The percussion hammer strikes a flint at this portion here, this also opens the cap of the small housing below.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “And how big will this housing be?”

Experienced Technician: “It looks big in the sketch but in reality, it will be smaller than your finger tip. However, the cap will have to be allowed to open and close, hence we will have to install a spring action. This allows the sparks from the flint to fall inside the housing and ignite the gunpowder, firing the musket. In this way, we can create muskets that do not require fuses.”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Hmm.”

Experienced Technician: “Do you understand?”

Crown Prince Marshal: “I understand. Are there issues with usage or

production?"

Experienced Technician: "As for usage, we still do not completely understand but firstly, since there is no need for a match or a fuse, the posture for firing is a lot more natural. Moreover, in adverse conditions, since there is no need for a naked flame, it will not be put out. Reloading is also easier and can be fired in more constrained positions."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Constrained positions... How about in tight formation?"

Experienced Technician: "That may require some training but I believe it is possible."

Crown Prince Marshal: "You will require more time, right?"

Experienced Technician: "Of course. This will be harder to produce than regular muskets and requires more detailed and precise work which only a team of highly skilled craftsmen can achieve."

Crown Prince Marshal: "In any case, produce a few for me."

Experienced Technician: "Yes."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Chief."

Head Craftsman: "Yes."

Crown Prince Marshal: "You'd better think of a production method."

Head Craftsman: "Ehh?!"

Engineer: "..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "That's your job, isn't it?"

Head Craftsman: "Y-yes."

Engineer: "Your Highness, I'm afraid..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Speak freely."

Engineer: "Each of these weapons are made individually. We may have a new idea for a weapon but all of these items require highly skilled engineers and craftsmen."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Hmm."

Engineer: "Hence, I do not think that we should produce the muskets one by one as we do now. What if one part was produced by a certain craftsman and another part was produced by another craftsman. What do you think of this *Division of Labour?*"

Crown Prince Marshal: "...!"

Engineer: "If we do this, each craftsman has to remember less of his work. If we only used middle-skilled craftsmen, they would still be able to produce high quality parts as long as they do not produce anything else. They could learn from working alongside more skilled craftsmen and they would still be able to contribute. The more complicated mechanisms should be entrusted to the experts while the less-skilled can work on the bulkier and less precise parts. This will also allow us to train new craftsmen."

Head Craftsman: "But what would the guilds say! Such a method of teaching would completely destroy all the years they've spent training their apprentices! Our way has always been to train each craftsman slowly and wholesomely. Through this education, we are able to keep the ways of our guild private and hidden so that we don't sabotage our own benefits!"

Engineer: "That's... I suppose..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Hmm, Chief, I have a proposition for you on this subject. How about we make a law which says that even if this technology manages to get disclosed, any musket or related technology produced within the influence and jurisdiction of the Holy Empire must have the approval of the metallurgy guilds of the Kingdom of Copper or a directive from the Guildmaster? I could issue a decree if you'd like."

Head Craftsman: "Really?!"



Division of Labour: The Division of Labour was first put into a proper philosophical work by the 18th century economist Adam Smith. The Demon King's civilising achievements may be beginning to take root in the world but this is not just limited to the Demon King. Even from the enemy, other Renaissance thinkers are beginning to make their appearance.

Crown Prince Marshal: “Yeah, *The Genius' Manuscript* was taken from the Kingdom of Metal anyway. Hasn't the Kingdom of Copper's technologies always been stolen by the Kingdom of Metal? ...If you think about it, it's not a bad thing for things to happen in reverse. So, Experienced Technician, Engineer, what about it?”

Engineer: “Yes!”

Experienced Technician: “Yes!”

Crown Prince Marshal: “I expect to see results from your young selves. Please help the Chief to revolutionise and modernise the industry.”

Engineer: “It would be an honour!”

Experienced Technician: “We pledge to serve!”

Crown Prince Marshal: “Hmm. Right. I'm a bit busy, so if there's anything else, we can leave it to next time.”

Head Craftsman: “Allow me to send you out, Your Highness!”

Clang!

Crown Prince Marshal: “Good, their work seems up to scratch. I've got high expectations for this.”

Holy Imperial General: "Chief, this is enough. Please speak to the Engineer and the Experienced Technician about this."

Closes door.

Crown Prince Marshal: "General."

Holy Imperial General: "Yes."

Crown Prince Marshal: "When you have the opportunity, liquidate that Chief. I think it'd be best if we leave the running of the factory to younger, more nimble minds."

Holy Imperial General: "With pleasure."

— — — The Manor in the Village of Wintering, the Study

Writing...

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Writing...

Elder Sister Maid: (With this, I've settled the work for the last two years... Now I've got to do the finances for this year)

Writing...

The Demon King: "..."

Writing...

The Demon King: "Elder Sister Maid."

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah, Mistress!"

The Demon King: "You're working too hard."

The Chief Maid: "Yeah, what would you do if you spoil your body?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Chief Maid... I'm sorry. May I help you with anything?"

The Demon King: "What are you so flustered about?"

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "No..."

The Demon King: "?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm not flustered — Mistress."

The Demon King: "...?"

The Chief Maid smiles.

Elder Sister Maid: "I have something to ask of you."

The Demon King: "What is it?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I would like to take a vacation."

The Demon King: "..."

The Chief Maid: "—"

The Demon King: "Where will you go?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I don't know. But—not here."

The Demon King: "And your sister?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I have spoken to her. Staying here is her dream after all... I'm sorry for being so stubborn. You and the Chief Maid saved my very life. I am really sorry."

The Demon King: "I... see..."

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty."

The Demon King: "I understand."

Elder Sister Maid smiles.

The Demon King: “...”

Elder Sister Maid: “Ah...”

The Demon King: “What are you looking at with those two eyes of yours.... Do you have anything else?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes, I... I will definitely come back.”

The Demon King: “Then have fun. Spread your wings. Go off and seek your own destiny.”

Elder Sister Maid smiles.

The Demon King: “You're not leaving because you hate this place, right?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Not at all. This house is my entire life. — Everything, the most kind-hearted, the friendliest... It's the most... important place in my life. I don't really want to leave it. But I must. I cannot allow myself not to... I have a lot of responsibilities I need to fulfil. — I can no longer allow myself not to walk on my own too fee, it's a harsh reality... Because of what I said that day at that square. Because of what I said, I must now understand the repercussions of my actions.”

The Demon King: “You don't really owe anyone anything for that.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Then, I want to choose.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Chief Maid: “Go.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes.”

The Demon King: “Will you take whatever I have taught you with you?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes. I will never forget the care and concern you have shown me. I will come back with a broadened view of the world.”

The Demon King: “—What of?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Probably war.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Chief Maid: “—”

Elder Sister Maid: “It's not about the other people, it is something which I must see for myself.”

The Demon King: “...I suppose you wouldn't listen if I told you to stop.”

The Chief Maid: “Yeah...”

Elder Sister Maid: “It'll be alright. I am not exactly a maid. But having received the guidance of the Chief Maid, I believe I have surpassed maids, especially since I have received the golden treasures of lessons from the Mistress, the Hero, the Female Paladin, and even the Three Disciples.”

The Demon King: “...I understand.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Mistress. In this ledger you will find the completed accounts for the last two years. The contents are all contained in this small cabinet here. You will find a content page here.”

The Demon King: “Hmm.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Umm, this may be presumptuous, but I have also thought of areas where further work should be done. In order to carry this on, I have written a series of notes here.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Chief Maid: “Very good, you've done a lot.”

Elder Sister Maid: “I had a good teacher.”

The Demon King: “When will you leave?”

Elder Sister Maid: "By dawn."

The Demon King: "You should sleep."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes. Please excuse me. Umm..."

The Chief Maid: "—"

Elder Sister Maid: "I love the both of you."

Runs off.

The Demon King: "We can't stop her."

The Chief Maid: "This is right."

The Demon King: "Chief Maid... You let her go."

The Chief Maid: "—No. This isn't a problem. No matter where she goes, no matter what she does, her faith in us will never change."

----- **The Demon World, the Substitute Conference**

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Am I late? Sorry."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "No, no, don't worry about it. It's not time yet. We're just sitting around drinking the Queen of Fairies' tea."

The Queen of Fairies: "That's right."

The Cyclops: "...It's... good..."

The Hero: "This is pretty nice."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hahahahaha. Then give me a cup too."

Pours tea.

The Baron of Steel: "Terribly sorry."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Sorry to have made you wait."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Oh, the two of you made it."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Looks like everyone is here."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Then, ahem. The Second Conference has now begun."

The Queen of Fairies: "The topic for discussion today?"

The Cyclops: "...First, we resume with last time."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "That's right, the issue of the Demons of the Pale."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "What's the situation?"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Let's hear the report from the Tribe of Fairies."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes... First, there have been no big movements. No squad on a scale larger than fifty people has been seen leaving the territory of the Pale."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Mmhmm."

The Queen of Fairies: "Also, ever since the new King returned to the city, there seems to have been a very anxious atmosphere throughout the territory of the Pale. The troops of the New King of the Pale have been on the move throughout the territory, but at present most of them have calmed down and returned. Of course, the number of soldiers patrolling each region is also impressive."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "In other words, there's the atmosphere of impending war?"

The Queen of Fairies: "Yeah, that's right. At the very least, the state of war with the Demons of the Pale, in other words, a state in which it would not be surprising if we received a surprise attack at any moment, is something we cannot deny."

The Cyclops: "We don't do things... like surprise attacks."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "How are the war and military preparations?"

The Queen of Fairies: "I'm not too clear about that. I mean, my scouts have confirmed that their soldiers are undergoing military training, and they are all outfitted, but... how to do I say this. We cannot deny that such a state is actually normal for the Demons of the Pale."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hahaha, that war-like tribe."

The Queen of Fairies: "We will remain on the alert but apart from that, there's no other urgent news. I apologise."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "No, no, it is very important news that there are no movements."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Right. Then back to the topic at hand, this is about how to deal with the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale."

The Hero: "...Hmm."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Will you allow the Tribe of the Fang to say something?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Yeah."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Please."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The Tribe of the Fang is a Tribe which lives for battle. However, living in this world, we have no intention to be unreasonable. If we go to war and we manage to rout them, I believe that something like 'exterminating the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale' is a far too heavy-handed method."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Of course."

The Queen of Fairies: "Indeed."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Ahh. We're not very good at this, but I've written a letter. What do you think about that?"

The Queen of Fairies: "A letter?"

The Cyclops: "...to whom?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "To the Pale."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Ahhh! A request for surrender?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "That's right! What do you think of this course of action?"

The Baron of Steel: "Hmm, we've never considered that before."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I see..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "The letter will read:

'You are nothing but a coward. On the battlefield, we will thoroughly exterminate you. If you had any disagreements, you could have voiced them out harmoniously. The underhanded means you chose to use are not the way of the warrior. Such a deplorable attitude is not something we can tolerate from any Tribe, even if it is the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale, and we are unable to consider you a first-rate people with honour and dignity.'

'If you still wish to discuss terms, we will leave a seat for you. However, if this is not what you want, then we will meet on the battlefield.'"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Hmm, that is well thought out. You did not even directly mention a surrender."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hoho."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "If we had told them to throw down their weapons and beg for their lives, would a stubborn and proud race like the Demons of the Pale really listen? They would rather fight off our combined invasion! The result being their self-destruction."

The Baron of Steel: "Hmmm."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "That's why I asked them for discussions. Just discussions."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hoho."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "If we do that, then we'll be able to get those guys to appear at the Conference, right? This Conference is like the Kurultai, but it's not really. They won't be able to use their sly tactics here anymore."

The Baron of Steel: "That is true."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "And if they do appear at the Conference, we can severely warn them. We can tell them that we will not accept their illegal methods and that they should prove it if they want to apologise."

The Queen of Fairies: "Prove?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "First, deliver us the heads of the New King and their Generals."

The Queen of Fairies: "Kill them..."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Well, we don't have a choice. I agree with the Silver Tiger Lord here."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Yeah."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "More importantly, on a temporary basis, they should allow a mixed coalition force of our troops to be emplaced in their territory. They should also probably make some monetary reparations, but I'm not too clear on household affairs like that."

The Baron of Steel: "That's not a bad suggestion."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Yeah."

The Queen of Fairies: "...Yeah."

The Cyclops: "...Let's send..."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "This has problems too."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Oh, I've already thought of that!"

The Baron of Steel: "Oh?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "At the last Conference, the Khan of the Gate mentioned this, right? That we should reasonably consider what will be the plans for after the war. If we were to attack them without any warning, it would not be honourable. In a way, we would be no different from the Demons of the Pale. By sending out this latter, we are giving them a chance to have a discussion with us. On top of that, we are also telling them that rejecting the methods of apology we have laid out for them will be equivalent to a Declaration of War. At this time, we could attack them, having given advance warning."

"If this happens, and say we manage to eliminate the military power of the Demons of the Pale on the battlefield and they retreat to their city, can we deal with the people? Our troops might act like they own the place and bring in a state of anarchy. However, if we clearly delineate our course of action at this Conference, then we will not act out of selfishness."

The East Fortress Base Commander: (This is reasonably well thought out. That Tiger guy... Looks like I've changed the way I think about him.)

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "A well thought out proposal!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hahahaha! Not really. I'm bad at thinking of things. This is the wisdom which I sought from the Sages of the Fang. Those old guys were so happy to contribute they started nosebleeding! They came up with this after three days and three nights and consecutive counselling. They're no longer fit enough to fight so this is how they contribute."

The Baron of Steel: "Hahahaha! I see!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "So, what do you think? This isn't my idea and I think we should come up with a clearer proposal but for now, I believe this is a good course of action."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Yes, a brilliant strategy."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "A good Khan knows how to borrow from the strengths of his people. Very impressive."

The East Fortress Base Commander: (For sure.)

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "What do you think, my Khans? I believe that this proposal is fairly appropriate."

The Hero smiles.

The Baron of Steel: "I have no objections."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Me neither."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Then we will send such a letter. As for the writing itself... Chieftain of the Tattooed, we shall entrust it to you."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "With pleasure."

The East Fortress Base Commander: (That was also a good consideration.)

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It would probably be disadvantageous to the message if it came from the Tribe of Banshees."

The Baron of Steel: "Then, is there anything else?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "I apologise, but I'm afraid the Tribe of the Gate has a request we would like to make."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hoho, what sort?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Do you mind if I call in a very important member of the Self-Governing Council of our city? She is related to this request."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Do you?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Nope."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Not at all."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Come in."

Door opens.

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hoho."

The Hero: "Ahh."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...What are you doing here?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I am a member of the Tribe of Fire Dragons, the Fire Dragon Lady. I beg for your continued guidance and support." *Bows.*

The Hero: "Uhhh."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Those are... not really the words of a sheltered lady."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Ahem!"

The Queen of Fairies: "Right, and what is this about?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "First, let me describe to you the state of the City of the Gate. Firstly, our city... is infested with people. I myself am a soldier, so I don't like to say it this way, but the surrounding agricultural areas and roads have been ravaged."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hmm."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "There was a massive siege there after all."

The Baron of Steel: "That's right."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "The people traffic has returned considerably, though it's still not the same as it used to be, but for a city on the plains, it's not bad. That is not what I am worried about. Everyone is working well on this matter. However, for us to have restored our fortunes to this degree, it is based to a large extent on prosperous trade. The trade routes to the city are incredibly important but while they're not completely impassable, the current roads are insufficient to support the caravan trade."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hmm."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "And so?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Of course, since this is in my territory, my people are working hard to resolve the issue, but all of us will stand to benefit from trade."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Certainly, it is the territory of the Tribe of the Gate..."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "The City of the Gate is the personal demesne of the Demon King, along with all surrounding areas within a two day horse ride."

The Queen of Fairies: "About there."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "So after some analysis, we have discovered that after the long periods of war, the roads and routes have been thoroughly destroyed with most of the bridges burnt. I seek to restore and rebuild this infrastructure."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hmm."

The Baron of Steel: "My Tribe would be happy for that as well, however."

The Queen of Fairies: "That's right, it's bound to cost a ridiculous sum of money and labour."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "This is why I've brought an expert on this subject."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hoho."

Fire Dragon Lady: "Yes. According to the research conducted by the Self-Governing Council of the City of the Gate, our profits will rise significantly with the construction of appropriate infrastructure."

The Baron of Steel: "Huh?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Hey, how can profits rise just from building roads?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Why don't you explain?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "Firstly, we have just concluded a very, very, very long war.

This is because the previous Demon King was content to watch the war rage on from the side lines. And also because the present Demon King has taken ill."

The Queen of Fairies: "I... see..."

Fire Dragon Lady: "The first idea to express is that if we have enough manpower to fight a war, it's improbable that we do not have enough to build roads."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "That's logical."

Fire Dragon Lady: "If we build new roads, people and goods can flow. The flow of goods is the first step to prosperity. If one lacks in anything, they can be bought from neighbouring countries. If one has a surplus of anything, they can be sold to neighbouring countries. And with the buying and selling of goods, you get tax revenue."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Tax, huh."

The Hero: "...Hmm."

Fire Dragon Lady: "The plans are detailed in this map here."

Papers fluttering.

Fire Dragon Lady: "We are considering nine main roads. These utilise the old roads as a basis so that they can be constructed to an appropriate size in the shortest possible time. We intend to name the route The Avenue of the Nine Tribes. Moreover, to expand on this, we intend to construct eighteen smaller roads."

The Baron of Steel: "What a large-scale project!"

Fire Dragon Lady: "These roads should have mounds of dirt by the sides and if possible, they should be constructed from stone."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Why?"

Fire Dragon Lady: "One of the major troubles of this world is the preparations against the flooding of large rivers. One way of doing this is to plant Pagoda Trees to the left and right of the roads at set intervals. Their roots can

take hold of the soil and prevent landslides or mudslides. Furthermore, securing the safety of the waterways also allows more stable irrigation channels.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “What's that?!”

Fire Dragon Lady: “This is second-hand information but in the Subterranean World, there are many places like my hometown where the presence of water is extreme. Places are at constant risk of flooding, places without water are just an expanse of dried leaves. That is the reason why we are constantly at war for the prosperous regions. As a result, I am putting forth this plan to shift water from areas where there is too much water and risk of flooding to places where there is too little water and there is a risk of drought.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “...How long would it take to complete this plan?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Nine years for the Avenue of the Nine Tribes. Another eighteen years to complete the other eighteen roads.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “And how much people and money would you require for that?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “That is what I am here to request.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “What?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “A transit pass.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Yes. The transit pass will take the form of a piece of wood with recorded numbers. We can produce these in very large quantities and sell them in bulk. Merchants who have a transit pass are permitted to one caravan travelling along the Avenue of the Nine Tribes without having to pay any taxes.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Hmm. In other words, you're just collecting taxes in advance?”

Fire Dragon Lady: “You could say so?”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “How expensive would these transit permits be? Would a normal merchant be able to afford them?”

Fire Dragon Lady: "They wouldn't be that expensive. In other words, it would have to be cheaper to buy them than to pay for all the transit taxes. We also need to make it clear that merchants who choose not to buy the transit permits will not be discriminated against. However, we should not make the taxes too low or too high such that it causes an adverse reaction. I believe it would be best if we explained the usefulness of the roads and allow them to make the calculated decision whether or not to buy it. Moreover, these roads need to be controlled for the long term. I'm sure you are aware of this, but small cities grow bigger, and at places where there are no inhabitants, entire cities could spring up. With the irrigation channels creating reservoirs, new fields can be created. With this plan, we'll need to ensure that provisions are made to carry it on for generations."

The Queen of Fairies: "..."

The Cyclops: "...We do not have money."



Pagoda Tree: A member of the acacia tree family. They are native to China and Japan. As hardy tree with strong roots, they are often used to line the sides of roads in Japan.

Fire Dragon Lady: "Do not worry. For the Tribe of Giants, we have an alternative proposal for the obtaining of transit permits. In place of money, we would like to request to borrow your strength in protecting the route."

The Hero: "...Who taught this girl?"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "And will my Tribe be able to receive the water?"

The Fire Dragon Lord: “...”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “We the Tribe of the Fiends were in some ways responsible for destroying the roads, but we fully support this proposal. We Fiends are comprised of numerous Races who live in many cities throughout the land. With the route in place, we will definitely benefit greatly.”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Definitely.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Interesting. I cannot give you an answer right away, but I will communicate this to my people. Await my reply.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “My daughter.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Was I good enough for the Fire Dragon Lord?”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Good job. I support you.”

The Queen of Fairies: “I will check and see what we can do for you.”

The Cyclops: We... support this.”

The Baron of Steel: “We will withhold our support for the time being. We are grateful for the metals that we can trade for, but we do not yet know to what extent we will benefit. For such an important matter, I must confer with my Tribe, but I will get back to you as soon as I can.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “The views on this are split roughly down the middle but no one actively opposes this proposal. Please give us some time to ask for the opinions of our Tribes.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Of course.”

The Queen of Fairies: “Understood.”

The Cyclops: “Yeah...”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Very good, my fellow Khans.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Ha. I was wondering just what the beautiful

daughter of the Fire Dragon Lord was about to talk about but it turns out that she had some very important and insightful things to say.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “The next time I appear before you, I will bring some more detailed proposals.”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “You've saved us. It's great that you know the procedures and etiquettes.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “It is my pleasure.”

— — — — **The Demon World, the Substitute Conference**

Fire Dragon Lady: “Black Knight.”

The Hero: “Yes.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “I apologise for being unable to address the queries that you had. Being in the place that I was, there were many stressful demands.”

The Hero: “Yeah. That's to be expected. You did very well. It was a very important proposal.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “Do you think saying something like that would make me happy?”

The Hero: “Oh.”

Fire Dragon Lady: “I have something to ask of you, Hero.”

The Hero: “Anything I can do... ‘Hero’?!”

Walks in.

The East Fortress Base Commander: (*Eye contact*) “Sorry, I told her everything.”

Aide-de-Camp: (*Eye contact*) “I'm really sorry.”

Fire Dragon Lady smiles.

The Hero: "...Yes."

Fire Dragon Lady: "I would like to meet the Demon King. Please take me to her."

————— **The Manor in the Village of Wintering, the Corridor**

The Hero: "..."

The Hero: "What's this, I've been really bullied."

The Hero: "Why do I have to wait in the corridor while the Fire Dragon Lady and the Demon King converse. Can I cry? Can I cry?"

The Hero: "...Can I?"

The Hero: "I've really lost my confidence as a Hero, dammit."

The Hero: "...?"

"__"

"__. __"

The Hero: "No, no. I can't. I can't eavesdrop. I'm a Hero so I've got to be manly about this."

"__!__!"

"__"

The Hero: "...Umm."

The Hero: "Whoa! No way! It's not good to eavesdrop. Only that perverted old man would do something like that."

The Hero: "..."

"__. __"

“—”

The Hero: “...” *Listening in.*

The Chief Maid: “What is it, Hero?”

The Hero: “Nothing!”

The Chief Maid: “Really?”

The Hero nods.

The Chief Maid: “Well, well.”

Knock knock.

The Chief Maid: “Your Majesty, would you like some more tea?”

Opens door.

The Hero: “Ah.”

The Demon King: “No, I'm good. And Hero, the Fire Dragon Lady is going home, please send her there.”

——— The City of the Gate, the Rainbow Hill

Flash!

The Hero: “Alright... We're here.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “Thank you, Black Knight.”

The Hero: “No, no.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

Grass blowing.

The Hero: "Umm, I'll send you to the city."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "No."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Black Knight?"

The Hero: "Yes."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Answer me honestly. Have you left me?"

The Hero: "Umm..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I said that you're my most important person, right?"

The Hero: "Yeah..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

The Hero: "I may be important to you, but I'm important to everyone."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "How important?"

The Hero: "Very."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "How important am I to you?"

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Please answer."

The Hero: "If it gets dangerous... I'll protect you."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "...Hehehe."

The Hero: "?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Saying something like that could lead to misunderstandings."

The Hero: "Really?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Normal people aren't as strong as you. As a result, any woman only needs one of you to protect her. That's why when you say something like that, you're not just talking about protection, this has the same weight as a confession."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "It's true that you didn't exactly say that... There's a proverb that goes, 'Even with the correct food, you can't raise a wild animal.'"

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "You will protect me, but you're also married to me for life, right?"

The Hero: "Umm... That's a bit self-centred."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Even with my father, I hate it when I'm not number one in their hearts. I cannot allow there to be other women... Hero."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "You don't have to feel terrible about abandoning me. I am a student of betrayal. I do not attach very much emotion to a single principle anyway. However, I have just one request."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "When a really important person comes, I want you to tell her how important she is. With your strength, I'm sure you could protect hundreds, even thousands of young maidens. However, even for you, I'm certain that there are limitations to your heart. You know this as well, do you not? This is not something very difficult to say, but with the ambiguous manner by which the Demon King was speaking, I'm sure she was quite troubled."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Am I being unreasonable?"

The Hero: "No... I don't think so."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Then you should say it."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

The Hero: "Ah—"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "..."

The Hero: "...I guess in the end, it's not possible. If it's killing people or demons... If it's burning down fields... If it's destroying lands and laying waste to cities... I can do all of those. But to say something like that to someone like her. Someone so... dazzling. I don't know... I feel so lucky. I don't know how to say it right."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Coward."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "If you used such emotions to wield your sword as well, you would certainly get thrashed. You're so strong yet you're so pathetic. Your hands have been stained with the blood of your foes but you can't even carry such feelings to the woman you love. You were talking about your own abilities earlier, but what is this?"

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Is protecting the girl you love just taking down enemies? Do you think just because you're the Hero, things are so easy?"

Slap!

The Hero: "!"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "This is my farewell gift to you."

The Hero: "...Yeah."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I have been happy. I have been beautiful. And then... I got to know you. You, whom I called my Lord. You made me feel the pain of regret and jealousy. Do you think that's okay? What you did to me? You owe me a large debt. The only way to pay it back is to be happy. Don't forget that."

The Hero: "..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "...I'm going home."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "..."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "..."

Walking through grass.

————— The Kingdom of Reeds, a Lake Boat

~♪~~♪

Disciple Bard: "～♪...♪"

Farmer: "Ho! What a beautiful sound, Mistress Bard!"

Farmer's Daughter: "Hey! Hey!"

Disciple Bard: "Is that a boat? Will you take me across?"

Farmer: "Where are you going? We're going to the city to sell our barley and dairy products."

Farmer's Daughter: "You wanna come with?"

Disciple Bard: "Yes, please!"

Farmer: "Hop on!"

Disciple Bard: "Thank you very much."

Farmer: "Well, you can rest on this here straw."

Farmer's Daughter: "Hey, hey, Mistress Bard, where are you from?"

Disciple Bard: "A very long ways away."

Farmer: "Oh. But isn't that there a reed pipe?"

Disciple Bard: "Yes, it is. I just learnt how to play it yesterday. It's a very popular instrument in these parts."

Farmer: "I'm not sure if it's popular or what, but a country with a lot of reeds, every village has got a guy who can play the reed pipe."

Farmer's Daughter: "I can play it too."

Disciple Bard: "Shall we play together?"

Farmer's Daughter: "Yes!"

~♪~~♪

Disciple Bard: "～♪ ...♪"

~♪~~♪

Farmer's Daughter: "～♪ ...♪"

Farmer: "Well, you're very good."

Farmer's Daughter: "That was fun!"

Disciple Bard: "Yes it was, you're surprisingly good." *Smiles.*

~♪~~♪

Farmer: "Hey, hey!"

Bullock Cart Farmer: "Hey! You going to the city?"

Farmer: "That's right!"

Farmer's Daughter: "We'll be back soon!"

Bullock Cart Farmer: "Help me check out the price of wheat!"

Farmer: "Got it!"



Dairy Products: This refers to foods made from milk such as cheese, yoghurt, and butter. As they do not spoil as quickly as milk, they were eaten extensively in a time without refrigeration.

~~♪

~♪~~♪

Farmer's Daughter: "..."

Farmer: "Ah, looks like she fell asleep."

Disciple Bard: "Looks that way."

Farmer: "It's been really tough everywhere lately."

Farmer's Daughter: "..."

Disciple Bard: "Has it?"

Farmer: "Yeah, there hasn't been much to eat."

Disciple Bard: “...”

Farmer: “If it's alright, I'd like to pay you for your music.”

Disciple Bard: “Umm, well...”

Farmer: “Relax, Mistress Bard. I mean, I wouldn't go hungry in exchange for music. But you ought to be paid for your work.”

Disciple Bard: “That's true. Music and poetry are art forms that drive their artists hungry... but I'm still going on!”

Farmer: “Your music is really something that can keep me going. In fact, hearing good music does make me a lot less hungry. I at least know that much. Haha!”

Disciple Bard's stomach rumbles.

Farmer: “Here, have some black bread.”

Disciple Bard: “No, I can't accept that.”

Farmer: “It's fine, just take half. We're poor, so we can't afford to pay enough for your music anyway.”

Disciple Bard: “No way! You've given me this boat ride!”

Farmer: “Hahaha! Well, we'll reach the city tomorrow. Until we get there, I'll be real happy if I could hear a few songs.”

Disciple Bard: “Yes. What kind of music is good?”

Farmer: “Good? That's a very strange way of asking! But we don't really know many songs. We only know things like festive songs, maybe birthday songs or New Year songs.”

Disciple Bard: “Then, shall I play a piece from my hometown?”

Pulls out instrument.

Farmer: “Oh my, what's that?”

Disciple Bard: "It's a Dragonshead Fiddle. It's quite special, isn't it?"

Farmer: "Yes, it looks like it'll be great to play on journeys."

Disciple Bard: "Then, let me play a fun song. This is a song that always brings a smile to my most important friend..."

Farmer: "Ahahahaha! Go on!"

Disciple Bard: (...Everyone is really nice. Everyone is really warm... What's this? I'd expected the Surface World to be a lot scarier...)

Chapter 5, “How boring. Humans are so weak after all.”

— — The Cheerful Murders Incident No. 6

“I am Cheerful Swordsman Nanako!”

“I am Cheerful Philosopher Suika!”

The two voices were in harmony. The harmony between the sweet and brave voice of the young girl and the soprano of a boy about to break his voice pierced through the night as they confronted the followers of Darkness.

“We are!”

“We are!”

The two suddenly turned around and drew their weapons.

“We are cruel fighters who show no mercy to monsters! We will conquer you! Don't think we're stubborn and naïve! We are also known as ‘The Cheerful Murders’! We will vanquish you in 170 seconds!”

“Don't be stupid! This isn't a game for children!”

The heavily armoured monsters displayed no fear or apprehension as they called out to the two mages.

“How old are you? Why are you still wearing a full suit of tight armour? Do you have strange intentions towards Nanako?”

The dry monotone of the eleven-year-old tortured the spirit of the monster, who recoiled as if hurt. With a flutter in his heart, the boy turned and asked expressionlessly, “Nanako-chan, should I not have said that in such a grown up manner?”

To begin with, the suits of armour were not made of metal but were formed out of living organisms that resemble ants. They conform to the body shape and are hence very tight. When irritated, they produce formic acid. Upon seeing the

powerful solvent, the two immediately leapt into the air just as the ground beneath their feet dissolved.

“What are you doing?”

“What's that strange liquid oozing out of your mouth?!”

Despite that she had said such an impudent thing, she was still surprised by the sudden attack. Moreover, the checkered miniskirt, which she had hitherto paid no heed, twisted and fell off.

“Na-Na-Nanako-chan.”

With puppy-like eyes, the young boy who was her partner looked up at her. He felt a tightness in his chest, a mixture of sweetness, and at the same time, extreme embarrassment.

————— The Mansion in the Village of Wintering, in the Room

Flip.

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “...”

Flip flip.

The Demon King: “Heh... This is the really intense part.”

The Hero: “Really?!”

The Demon King: “Yeah, this is dangerous. To think that such a wonderful scene would exist in the six volume series.”

The Hero: “...Hoho.”

The Demon King: “But this is completely unreasonable!”

Shuts book!

The Hero: "What's wrong, Demon King?"

The Demon King: "I want to complain against the author! This main character is eleven years old, right?! Eleven years old means she's one year younger than the Little Maid Sister!"

The Hero: "Mm, yeah? Thereabouts..."

The Demon King: "In that case, what's with this happy, heart-racing scene! Even if it's coincidental, those lips, that... Hehhhh! I want to complain!"

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "In this world, there exists two people who are far more mature, but why is it that such wonderful acts of coincidence only occur in the destinies of people like them? They should apologise to the ladies and gentlemen who don't have this privilege!"

The Hero: "Calm down."

The Demon King: "...I am calm."

The Hero: "Really."

Flips pages.

The Demon King: "Hero."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "Take the book."

The Hero: "Got it."

The Demon King: "...Ahem."

The Hero: "?"

The Demon King: "How do you feel?"

The Hero: "Normal."

The Demon King: “R-really?” *Trembling.*

The Hero: “What's wrong?”

The Demon King: “Nothing. Open it halfway.”

The Hero: “It's slightly off, though.”

The Demon King nods.

The Hero: “?”

The Demon King coughs.

The Hero: “What's up?”

The Demon King: “Nothing.”

The Hero: “Really?”

The Demon King: “Hero. Touch my ear.”

The Hero: “?” *Reaches over.*

The Demon King: “Mmm.” *Flinches.*

The Hero: “...Uhhh.”

(The Demon King is being so evasive, something has got to be going on.)

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “Umm, Demon King.”

The Demon King: “?”

The Hero: “About the Female Paladin, I accepted her pledge.”

The Demon King: “You said that before. That's fine.”

The Hero: “Y-yeah. But, your ear... it's very... cute?”

The Demon King: "What are you saying? It's not even the least bit related."

The Hero: (...I failed. I am so useless. I guess the Way of Bounciness can't open the gate to a girl's heart after all.)

The Demon King: "Mmm."

The Hero: "Hope you're feeling better, Demon King."

The Demon King: "There was never anything wrong about the way I was feeling."

The Hero: "I see..."

The Demon King: "Touch my ear again."

The Hero: "Yeah..."

The Demon King: "Mmm."

The Hero: "Uhh."

The Demon King: "Again."

The Hero rubs.

The Demon King yawns.

The Hero: "Umm, Demon King?"

The Demon King: "...?"

The Hero: "You look sleepy."

The Demon King: "I'm not sleepy at all."

The Hero: "I see..."

Knock knock.

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty. I've made some custard."

Sets down.

The Demon King: "Really! Looks delicious. Let's eat."

The Hero: "Yeah."

The Chief Maid: "Hero, has something happened?"

— — — The City of Reeds, Outside the Market

~♪~~♪

Disciple Bard: "~~♪ Spring is coming, rejoice, rejoice. Let us escape from the horror of the harsh winter. ♪ Let the spirits of spring sing, let the birds in the woods pray. ♪"

Female Citizen: "What a beautiful voice..."

Disciple Bard: (Extend my voice... Let the sounds harmonise. I'm singing! I'm singing!)

Citizen: "Amazing!"

Disciple Bard: "~~♪ Receiving the laugh of the blessed sun, the flowers bloom. The west wind bears the sweet scent of wheat, the original love of man. The scent of the love song. ♪ The rabbits in the forest are singing, the nightingales chirping. The flowers blossom as the forest explodes with life, and the girls dance the joyous dance of spring."

Female Citizen: "What a musician!"

Farmer: "Heyhey! Give me half a bag of barley!"

Farmer's Daughter: "Thank you very much."

Citizen: "Right! Give me a bag of ginseng!"

Farmer's Daughter: "Yes!"

Disciple Bard: "Thank you!"

Female Citizen: "No, no, it's been a long time since I was last able to listen to such beautiful music."

Rich Citizen: "Well, you would be really high profile musician if you performed in a palace somewhere."

Disciple Bard: "No, no, performing on the streets like this is my favourite thing to do."

Citizen: "Please come again, we'll be waiting."

Farmer's Daughter: "Thank you.~♪"

—.

Disciple Bard: "Looks like you were real busy!"

Farmer: "No, no, it was nothing. I should be thanking you!"

Farmer's Daughter: "We sold a lot more than we usually do!"

Disciple Bard: "Great!" *Smiles.*

Farmer: "Thank you very much! This is just a little bit!"

Disciple Bard: "It's alright, it's alright! You really don't have to! You've already given me some delicious bread!"

Farmer: "But..."

Farmer's Daughter: "Here. Have some more bread then."

Disciple Bard: "...I'd love to. Thank you! See you again!"

Farmer's Daughter: "Let's play the flute together again!"

Disciple Bard: "The next time we meet.~♪"

— — — The City of the Gate, the Chambers of Commerce of the Union

The Young Merchant: "Good work."

Shrewd Accountant: "Good work... Have some cold safflower tea."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Thank you."

The Young Merchant: "How was the Conference?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "As expected, we couldn't settle anything right away, but I feel like we might be on to something."

The Young Merchant: "Do you think it will pass?"

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I believe so."

The Young Merchant: "If this plan doesn't go through, trade and a whole bunch of other things will be very difficult. First the roads, then the irrigation channels and dikes."

Shrewd Accountant: "You've really planned quite far ahead."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "It's because there aren't a lot of opportunities for business here in the Subterranean World."



Safflower: The flower is also used as red dye. It originally blooms yellow but the petals slowly turn red. The petals can be dried and brewed into a tonic. The resultant tonic can be dried to a powder and consumed.

The Young Merchant: "More importantly, the lack of a medium of exchange is a real problem."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yeah."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Medium of exchange?"

The Young Merchant: "The theory is simple. For example, let's say somebody has two units of salt and someone else has two units of meat. If they were to exchange one unit of their goods, they would both have the same amount of salt and meat. Then they would both be able to eat and live happily. In this way, as long as they're just exchanging goods, they wouldn't have a need for currency. The Subterranean World does use currency but trading with gold bullion or barter is more popular. In other words, the large scale exchange of goods is usually carried out by Khans and leaders through barter. It would be difficult to create a system with a medium of exchange in this case."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I see."

The Young Merchant: "However, we are merchants, so currency is to our advantage. We would be able to buy and sell goods in a much more flexible manner. It would also help to create new jobs."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "That is something I observed in the Surface World. Currency and money can often be bad things. However, when using a medium of exchange, good transfers can be done quicker. Money moves much easier than agreements between governments and Tribes so things are much easier. Movement is freer and as the currency is more divisible, small purchases can be made, making society safer and decreasing the chance of violence."

Shrewd Accountant: "...Hmm."

The Young Merchant: "And loans will increase too."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Is that part of the plan?"

The Young Merchant: "This time, we have put an extraordinary amount of effort into it, but loans are a type of money borrowing. Loans are basically an officialised way of saying, 'I'll pay you back in something later on, so give me

some money first.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “Is that how we get a medium of exchange?”

The Young Merchant: “Let's have a simple example. Let's assume there's a debt contract which says, 'Lend me a hundred gold pieces and I'll pay you back a hundred gold pieces.' If you could sign this contract without much difficulty, it would be the same as acquiring a hundred gold pieces, right? To the other party, this would also be the same as receiving a piece of paper worth a hundred gold pieces in future, right? Here, if you add it up, you've got two hundred gold pieces, right? You've theoretically increased the amount of money.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “In that case, I think that's an untruthful system. To begin with, the whole system relies on the hundred gold pieces being paid back after a definite amount of time and hence disappearing. How can you say that the amount of money has increased?”

The Young Merchant: “That is true, but perhaps you have seen my little trick with the wheat before? If you can get your hands on a large sum of money, then there are many opportunities for business. I could turn the hundred gold coins into a hundred and fifty gold coins. If I do that, I have effectively created fifty gold coins at no cost to myself. Wouldn't you call that profitable?”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “I suppose that's true.”

The Young Merchant: “That is the power of currency. Currency is basically the exchange of trust for capital. It seems that there are no banks in the Demon World yet. I have made a proposal to the Demon King and it seems like we should plan for the future by getting more involved in the City of the Gate and massing our capital here.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

The Young Merchant: “Don't look at me like that. I have no intention on harming this city or the Demon people or the Demon world. To begin with, this isn't something you can win or lose. By making the Union richer, nobody loses anything.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “I'll trust you on that.”

The Young Merchant: "Thank you."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Can I take it that you intend to use the trust of the City of the Gate, the Tribe of the Gate, and the daughter of the Khan of Dragons, that is to say, me, in exchange for capital?"

The Young Merchant: "...Well..."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "It is as you said, 'Money used as wealth is completely different from money used as a tool. The latter has the name of the merchant riding on it'."

The Young Merchant: "Yes. I did say that."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "In that case, I want to know precisely what you intend to do with the wealth which you will be obtaining from using my trust. Is that alright? It is my trust after all."

The Young Merchant: "Of course it is."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "I'll be looking forward to that, then."

The Young Merchant: "My, my."

Shrewd Accountant: "Hahaha. You seem so troubled."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "If I let you loose, you'd probably tear down the name of the Tribe of the Fire Dragons."

The Young Merchant: "Well, in that case, I'd better start planning... Hmm."

Shrewd Accountant: "Yeah, come. I have prepared it all. Paper, pen, ink, and many pots of hot tea. We will use the data gathered by milady here. The employees have all gone home so it would be faster if the two of us worked through it."

The Young Merchant: "Is that so? Very good."

Shrewd Accountant: "Leave it to me."

Walks off and closes the door.

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

The Young Merchant: “Hmm.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “Merchant.”

The Young Merchant: “Yes?”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

The Young Merchant: “What is it?”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “—Let's say I was captured by a fearsome enemy and I wouldn't live to see the dawn of the morrow, what would you do?”

The Young Merchant: “Nothing.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

The Young Merchant: “That was a joke... I would save you of course?”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “So you would save me.”

The Young Merchant: “...Is that a hard question from a newcomer?”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “Maybe.”

The Young Merchant: “...”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

The Young Merchant: “I wouldn't save you just for the sake of saving you.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “Eh?”

The Young Merchant: “A merchant never does anything without profit.”

The Fire Dragon Lady: “...”

The Young Merchant: "However, you have given me many opportunities and learn very quickly. You are cool under pressure and very fair. I couldn't ask for a better business partner."

The Fire Dragon Lady: "Then... for life?"

The Young Merchant: "Haven't I said this before? The merchant's battle lasts forever."

— — — The Kingdom of the Lake, a Guesthouse in a Small City

Rain splashing.

Disciple Bard: "What a heavy rain... I can't see anything in this weather. So spring is the season for rain over here... That being said, despite being spring, it's quite cold..."

Drip, drip...

Disciple Bard: (Hmm. So that's how it is. — I've heard a lot about this Holy Relic but I don't know anything conclusive about it...)

Disciple Bard: "Hmm, it's really tough when you don't know anybody from around here. What should I do?"

Rain pouring.

Disciple Bard: (...I've still got some travel money but it's limited. Hmm, the Kingdom of the Lake sure is huge, I should head over to the capital. If there're lots of people there, I should be able to make some money. It wouldn't be bad if I could get hired at a large inn somewhere for a month or so. I could pick up some new rumours too...)

Knock knock.

Disciple Bard: "Hello?"

Innkeeper: "I'm terribly sorry."

Disciple Bard: "What's wrong?"

Innkeeper: "The ships have been unable to leave the ports because of this horrible storm. Many guests who left in the afternoon have come back and hence we do not have enough rooms. Would it be alright for you to share rooms?"

Disciple Bard: "Share rooms?"

Innkeeper: "Yes, you would be sharing with a woman of course. I would only allow men to share rooms with men. I'll do my best to cater to any needs you have, do tell me if you would like to change rooms."

Disciple Bard: "Of course it's alright." *Smiles.*

Elder Sister Maid: "I apologise."

Disciple Bard: "No, no, I apologise. I'm quite wet though, I'd like to change out of these clothes as soon as I can."

Elder Sister Maid: "Ahh, of course. Please come in."

Innkeeper: "Then, I have had someone bring towels and hot water. Thank you for agreeing to this arrangement."

Disciple Bard: "Sure."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you for your kind understanding."

Disciple Bard: "How should I address you?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I am the Elder Sister Maid. It's a pleasure to meet you. Here, you should get dressed."

Disciple Bard: "I am the Disciple Bard. As you can see, I'm a travelling bard. So you're a traveller too. How nice."

Rain pouring.

Disciple Bard: "What a heavy rain."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah... Umm, would you like some tea?"

Disciple Bard: "Eh? Yeah. That would be great, thank you."

Elder Sister Maid: "I'll pour you some, then."

Disciple Bard: "But there's nothing here, is there?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I've got some tea and a few cups... though they're made of brass."

Disciple Bard: "Wow... Amazing. You look like such a lady yet you seem accustomed to travel."

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm not a lady. I'm the daughter of a farming family in the South."

Tea pouring...

Disciple Bard: "Mmm... It's warm."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's great that they provided hot water." Smiles.

Disciple Bard: "Ahh, I've got some hard-baked cookies."

Elder Sister Maid: "Is it alright?"

Disciple Bard: "Sure, take half."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you."

Rain pouring.

Disciple Bard: "So where are you going?"

Elder Sister Maid: "For the time being, to the City of the Lake."

Disciple Bard: "Why? It's alright if you don't want to tell me."

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm heading to peruse the library of the Holy Order of the Lake. I've got a few things which are on my mind... That being said, I'm currently

on a tour of the various Kingdoms."

Innkeeper: "Wow!"

Elder Sister Maid: "I realised that there are a lot of things that I need to see. But it's really quite tiring to just fly out of one's own country like that."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah, it is... Things are expensive and it can get quite dangerous. The further North you go, the harsher things seem to be."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah..."

Disciple Bard: "Where I come from, even in times of war, people don't really die of starvation... so it was really quite a shock when I witnessed it for myself."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see... Where are you from?"

Disciple Bard: "Ahh. Hehehe. A very long way away."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see."

Rain pouring.

Disciple Bard: "Hey."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah?"

Disciple Bard: "When you say library, would it be about the Spirit of Light?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah. I hear the Holy Order keeps records about all kinds of things related to the Spirit."

Disciple Bard: "Do you think I could go with you?"

Elder Sister Maid: "?"

Disciple Bard: "Actually I'm currently in the process of writing a poem and a play. Of course, I've been practicing my instruments and reading up on stage directions. But I'm trying to incorporate them into one thing... On my journeys, I've developed an interest in this rumour about a Holy Relic."

Elder Sister Maid: “Is that so?”

Disciple Bard: “When you are writing poetry, it's not good to force things. But I thought that since I developed this on my own... Nah, it's really hard to explain.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Sure.”

Disciple Bard: “Eh?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Let's go together.” *Smiles.*

Disciple Bard: “Really? Well... I'm a traveller, and this is just something I said, so is it really alright for you to trust me so simply, what if I involved your young self into some kind trouble?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Humans are involved in all sorts of trouble from the day they are born.”

Disciple Bard: “I see. — Hmm, that's nice way of saying it. Let me write that down.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Hahaha.”

Disciple Bard: “Eh? Ahh. Sorry, sorry, I obsess over my work.”

Elder Sister Maid: “That's all right, it's much more fun with two people after all.”

— — — The Kingdom of Mist, a Lord's Manor

Steward: “Heh! Hehh!”

Obese Nobleman: “Wh-wh-what nonsense is this!”

Young Maid: “Ah.”

Obese Nobleman: “Those fools in the Church! What are they doing!”

Steward: “What is going on?”

Obese Nobleman: “!” *Crumples up and throws paper.*

Steward: “This is...”

Obese Nobleman: “How did the Wheat Futures Contracts end up in the hands of the Church! Now there's no way I can renege on this agreement! That damn fool!”

Runs in.

Attendant: “My Lord! There's trouble!”

Obese Nobleman: “What? What is it!”

Attendant: “A Collector for the Church has appeared in the city and the neighbouring villages!”

Obese Nobleman: “Collector...?”

Attendant: “They've been collecting large amounts of wheat and taking it with them!”

Slams table.

Young Maid: “Ahh!”

Obese Nobleman: “That damn Church, this is what they were after... At first I thought they were just colluding with the merchants but it seems their aim was to cut off power from us noblemen.”

Steward: “What will we do?”

Obese Nobleman: “We have money! Open discussions with the Church. We'll buy back those Wheat Future Certificates. Get me some ink and vellum!”

Steward: “Yes!”

Obese Nobleman: “Ugh. What an embarrassment. What makes the Church think they have authority over a proud family like ours which has ruled this land for eight generations?! Do they take us for petty merchant nobles!”

Attendant: "Umm."

Obese Nobleman: "Keep a look out for that Attendant! Even if he asks for one grain of wheat, make sure you stop him! No, that won't do. Stall him. But do it politely."

Attendant: "How could I—"

Steward: "Go now! If you want to keep your head, you'd better work like your life depends on it!"

Attendant: "Y-y-yes!"

Obese Nobleman: "This... this won't do."

----- The Citadel of Banshees, the Green Study

Banshee Ninja: "—No change from before."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hmm."

Banshee Minister: "The issue runs much deeper than we had thought."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It's because the conflict was extended, eh? The dissatisfactions and wants of the people are smouldering."

Banshee Minister: "Yeah."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The blood of the Demon Race."

Banshee Minister: "Please stop saying such terrible things."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It would be burning if there was an objective but until then, the things we have lost and our dissatisfactions are smouldering. This is how it is like for us. I can imagine the blood of the Tribe of the Fang must be boiling by now."

Banshee Minister: "Then there must be some kind of other objective involved."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “—”

Banshee Minister: “From our perspective, the proposal by the Khan of the Gate is not a bad thing.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “That may be so, but we should also consider if this will pointlessly aggravate the Demons of the Pale.”

Banshee Minister: “It should be fine if we pick a good place.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Place, huh.”

Banshee Minister: “This transit pass idea is an interesting attempt.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Oh?”

Banshee Minister: “Having carefully examined the plan, it seems to me that having separate transit passes for each of the Nine Roads would be better.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Ho.”

Banshee Minister: “For example, even if only those merchants that used the roads leading to the City of Giants could purchase the passes, the Banshee lands would still become richer. In other words, merchants will require the passes. The more merchants require the passes, the more passes we can sell, and the faster the job will be completed.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Hmm.”

Banshee Minister: “Also, we should consider sending out our young men and soldiers to work on building roads outside of the Banshee territories. If you're worried about the battle with the Demons of the Pale, then we should send them as far away as possible first, perhaps to the lands of the Automatons. We Banshees are relatively advanced in water treatment and irrigation techniques. I would think that any country would welcome our engineers.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “...Hmm.”

Banshee Minister: “What do you think?”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Call the Chief Engineer. He is most familiar with the engineers of the land. Have him set up hundred men construction teams and wait for my instructions. I will deliberate with the council and see just what price the technology of the Banshees can fetch."

Banshee Minister: "Shall we draft mercenaries?"

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "How repulsive. No, we'll just rely on the people. It's time to show the Demon World the power of the Banshees."

————— The Kingdom of the Lake, the Empty Library

Creaking staircase.

Templar Librarian: "Here we are."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you very much."

Disciple Bard: "Thank you."

Templar Librarian: "This library is filled with ancient texts. To ensure their preservation, please do not expose them to direct light."

Elder Sister Maid: "Understood."

Disciple Bard: "What a mountain of texts!"

Templar Librarian: "If you intend to peruse the texts, please bring them to the Preservation Room. I will bring some hot tea. Please convey my greetings to the Grandmaster."

Elder Sister Maid: "I will."

Templar Librarian: "In that case..."

Creaking staircase.

Disciple Bard: "Wow, you're pretty amazing."

Elder Sister Maid: "What do you mean?"

Disciple Bard: "The Grandmaster of the Holy Order of the Lake is a pretty impressive person, right? To think that you managed to obtain a reference letter from her."

Elder Sister Maid: "I knew her well. And even if the Female Paladin is an amazing person, that doesn't make me amazing by extension."

Disciple Bard: "That's true."

Elder Sister Maid: "How many do you think there are?"

Disciple Bard: "Two? Three hundred? There are lots of scrolls."

Elder Sister Maid: "They sure look ancient."

Disciple Bard: "My goal is to research the Holy Relic, but what about you? It'll probably be more efficient if we tried to help each other out."

Elder Sister Maid: "That's true."

Disciple Bard: "So what are you looking for?"

Riffling through texts.

Elder Sister Maid: "Umm, I'm not sure."

Disciple Bard: "Eh?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm not sure how to say this, but probably the Genesis? I'm looking for extremely ancient texts. As you know, this place probably has the oldest texts, so that's why I'm here... I'm not interested in the ancientness of the text but I'm trying to figure out a new start, so I want to know what things were like at the very beginning."

Riffling through books.

Disciple Bard: "Hmm, there sure are many things."

Elder Sister Maid: "They aren't very well organised."

Brushing off dust.

Disciple Bard: "What's this? It's much finer than vellum."

Elder Sister Maid: "I wonder why?"

Dust butts.

Disciple Bard: "Well?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Hmm, the Holy Relic, and other things..."

Disciple Bard: "I've got some children's stories and some wheat harvest statistics."

Flips pages.

Elder Sister Maid: "How valuable."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah. — Ahh, this is a compendium of hymns. It's my first time seeing something like this, but... I don't know the melodies."

Elder Sister Maid: "Is it old?"

Disciple Bard: "What do you think?"

Elder Sister Maid: "This is really old too."

Disciple Bard: "What?"

Elder Sister Maid: "It's a very old legend. The Spirit... of the Earth?"

Disciple Bard: "Eh? Could I take a look?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah, sure."

Passes book.

Disciple Bard: "...Hmm."

The Poem of the Destroyed Vellum.

Once, there was a paradise awash with light.

This was the land that the Spirits had lost.

Five stars shone bright above this land: forest, water, earth, gold, and fire. They lived long lives of strife, their age seven to the power of seven to the power of seven again.

A girl was born amidst the flames. She was born with an invisible diadem shining brilliantly on her forehead. From a young age, her infinite charity shone towards every existence in this world.

A boy was born on the ground. The holy child of a woman from a different world and a different spirit. He would purge the world of the black evil it had become corrupted with.

As their fingertips made contact, curling and joining, the promise of their youth burned in their chests. Under the cover of large wings, hope and the now liberated name of sin merged with their spirits.

With the destruction of the World of Spirits, paradise was lost.

However, the charity of the young girl continued to shine upon the world. Under the feet of those who knew the name of sin.

Elder Sister Maid: “A story about Spirits...? This is my first time seeing one.”

Disciple Bard: “This is... five families?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Eh?”

Disciple Bard: “This is about the five families of Spirits. I've never seen anything this ancient.”

Elder Sister Maid: “What do you mean?”

Disciple Bard: “In the De... I mean, in my hometown. Umm. Everyone lives on the earth. How should I say this... Well, it's a legend. They say we are descended

from five families of Spirits that existed a very long time ago when the world was just beginning. For example, my family is said to have descended from the Spirits of the Forest. I'm not sure how true this is, though? There aren't a lot of people who earnestly believe in this. But it seems there's some truth in this."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Bard: "But, what is this doing here..."

Elder Sister Maid: "The Holy Church of Light..."

Disciple Bard: "Eh?"

Elder Sister Maid: "The Holy Church. Their Headquarters come under the protection of the Primarch, they say that there are even more ancient documents lying hidden in the underground vaults under the Grand Cathedral."

Disciple Bard: "Eh? Eh?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Shall we go there?"

Disciple Bard: "Do you mean you have a letter of referral for that place as well?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Nope."

Disciple Bard: "Can we get in?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Not normally."

Disciple Bard: "What should we do?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Either way, the Grand Cathedral is in the Holy Imperial City, at the heart of the Holy Empire. If you're looking for rumours, or anything else really, that's one place we should not avoid."

Disciple Bard: "I see..."

Elder Sister Maid: "I was going to go alone anyway."

Disciple Bard: "Well, I've already boarded this ship. Let's go. Let's go. I'm sure

there'll be more detailed documents regarding the Holy Relic. I'm really quite interested now."

Elder Sister Maid: "Alright. Thank you." *Smiles.*

----- The Citadel of Fiends, the Orchard of Fruits

Cat-Eyed Courier: "Khan! Khan!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "What is it?"

Cat-Eyed Courier: "The Pale are on the move!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "!"

Cat-Eyed Courier: "Roughly twenty five thousand strong! Not the whole race but quite a few households have been mobilised for war. It's not as fast as when they were going back but they're proceeding at an alarming speed. The lands of the Demons of the Pale are still a mystery to us so we discovered them too late. By the time we noticed, they were already at the border."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Fine! Where are they going? The lands of the Banshees? The wilderness? The mountain ranges of the Dragons? Or could their aim possibly be the City of the Gate?!"

Cat-Eyed Courier: "None of them!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "What!"

Cat-Eyed Courier: "The destination of the Demons of the Pale is Gate itself! In other words, the place we call the Portal!"

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "..."

Cat-Eyed Courier: "The Human World!"

— — The Kingdom of White Night, the Palace of Frozen Chalk

The King of White Night: "Haaah?! Haaaa!"

Retinue: "Protect His Majesty the King!"

Human Soldier: "Aghhhh!"

Human Soldier: "Down with the Demons!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Hmph. What are you doing? Do you think you can protect your King by doing that?"

Magic swirling.

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Did that hit you?"

The King of White Night: "Ahhh! Ahhhhh!"

General of the Pale: "Hahaha. I am going to throttle you until you cry like a pig."

The King of White Night: "Ahhhhhhh! My arm!"

Human Soldier: "Your Majesty!"

Human Soldier: "Damn you!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "...*Curse of Bonds.*"

Magic swirls.

Human Soldier: "...!"

Retinue: "...!"

General of the Pale: "How funny. These pathetic fools think they can stop me with just their hands? The insects. So that's all that humans can amount to!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Hahahaha!"

The King of White Night: "S-stop. Just what do you damn Demons want!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Stop talking. It is an embarrassment to be spoken to by

the likes of you."

The King of White Night: "I am the King of this country... Agh!"

Human Soldier: "...!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Oh, and your hand? Won't you have bad balance with just one hand? I see, so Humans can have things like Kings. That's nice to know."

Magic throbbing.

The King of White Night: "—!—! Aghhh!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Hahahaha! Now you've got double the weight on you! That's a good expression, Your Majesty... Just like a worm."

General of the Pale: "Ahahahaha!"

The King of White Night: "—!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "You seem to have turned quite pale. Shall we warm you up? Not to worry... *Burning Phosphorus of Hell*."

The King of White Night: "—! Aghh! Agghhhhhh!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Very good, Your Majesty. I like that dance you've got there. You look just like a jumping bean!"

Door opens.

Cavalryman of the Pale: "General! We have swept the city clean of any resistance!"

General of the Pale: "Continue to send out suppression forces throughout the city! Draft the humans for construction. After that, take them as slaves and take all their valuables. I will not tolerate resistance. It's the death sentence for them all!"

Cavalryman of the Pale: "Yes!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Hmm."

General of the Pale: "What is it, Your Majesty?"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "How boring. Humans are so weak after all."

General of the Pale: "Well, that's because we carried out a surprise attack on the weakest part of the Human World."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Hmm. That's true... This is the Human World. There's game everywhere. First we'll establish a foothold, and then who knows where that will lead us."

General of the Pale: "Yes."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "With whom were they collaborating again?"

General of the Pale: "The largest Tribe in the Surface World, the Holy Empire, and an organisation called the Church."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "For now, send out a standard unit to ambush them. If we kill them, things should get really interesting."

General of the Pale: "Yes."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "The country next door is the Kingdom of Metal, right? We should secure that country and after that move on to attack the rest."

General of the Pale: "A brilliant plan."

----- The Kingdom of Oak, the Farmlands along the Road

Disciple Bard: "...How tough."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Chirp! Chirp!

Disciple Bard: "So many crows. That's..."

Elder Sister Maid: “A cremation.”

Disciple Bard: “Eh?”

Elder Sister Maid: “There isn't an *obituarian* standing around so it's probably a serf... Only the family members are present.”

Disciple Bard: “Serf?”

Elder Sister Maid: “They're peasants who live a life of agriculture, almost like slaves.”

Disciple Bard: “There are slaves in this world?!”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes... We saw a lot of people working in the villages and fields as we passed by, right? There are lesser settlements in the North so you may not have noticed.”

Disciple Bard: “...”

Elder Sister Maid: “Don't get angry, Miss Bard.”

Disciple Bard: “Why...”

Elder Sister Maid: “Even if you get angry, you can't save those people. We can't make anybody happy.”

Disciple Bard: “But—”

Elder Sister Maid: “Don't get angry.”

Disciple Bard: “...”

Elder Sister Maid: “I was born to a family of serfs, I am a serf.”

Disciple Bard: “Eh?”

Elder Sister Maid: “I escaped with my sister, by luck... By some incredible miracle, we were found by our Mistress. We worked at the home of our Mistress, and she also taught us to read and do arithmetic. Our birth was truly

sad. Neither our father nor our grandfather even had names. The names which we now have were given to us by our Mistress."

Disciple Bard: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "I know that you are angry on my behalf and on the behalf of everyone else. Why don't you stop being angry? I am happy that you are, not a lot of people know about us... that serfs are slaves, or how horrible this is. But I've been a slave since I was born. Many of us don't know anything outside of it."

Disciple Bard: "That can't be..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Well, it's the truth."

Disciple Bard: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Don't cry."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Ms. Bard."

Disciple Bard: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Let's sing as we walk. Teach me a cool song."



Obituarian: In medieval times, they would stand at street corners and call out the names of the dead to give notice, as well as provide funeral services. More recently, the jobs have been divided, with obituaries appearing in newspapers, and morticians selling funeral services and caskets.

Disciple Bard: "...Why?"

Elder Sister Maid: "It's quite special that I could travel with you. I thought I should at least learn one song. Moreover, those people have nothing to look forward to in their days. So don't sing a sad song, sing something robust."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Rather than being angry, give them a song... as a present."

Disciple Bard: "I understand. — This a song that the Fang... a war-like people from the wilderness, sing when they drink. They're quite violent, but emotions can run high when this song is being sung.

Empty your glass, o men of the wilds.

Run through the crimson earth.

Now, my pride, my honour, under the blue sky, charge with your spear.

Spring has come, bringing its sweet fragrance.

The flowers are red, the leaves are green. The sky climbs high and pure.

You can rest when you're in the palace in the sky. So, dry that cup of wine with almonds, for the girl with black hair that you love, with flowers sewn to her dress—"

Elder Sister Maid: "The flowers are red, the leaves are green—"

Disciple Bard: "Yeah."

Elder Sister Maid: "What a splendid song. I love it very much. To think there could be something so beautiful on this earth."

Disciple Bard: "This is the kind of song that can make a grown man cry when he's drunk."

Elder Sister Maid: "Hahahaha."

Disciple Bard: "It's spring."

Elder Sister Maid: "This is a fairly poor area. Spring is usually the time for the wheat harvest but this year, even though the harvest hasn't been bad, due to various reasons, the price of wheat has been dropping. At least now, because it's spring, at the very worst, people can go into the forest to pick mushrooms, or wild herbs, cabbages, or ginseng, or even beans. However, because they cannot preserve the food, they may have to starve later. This can last until autumn but when the snow builds up, that's when people start dying of hunger."

Disciple Bard: "...That sounds tough."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "Why is it so tough?"

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Bard: (Why do I feel such a tightness in my chest... Even though these people are humans... Even though they aren't friends of us Demons...)

Elder Sister Maid: "We can already see the city gate."

— — — — The Kingdom of Oak, the City along the Road

Gatekeeper: "Don't make any trouble."

Disciple Bard: "Yes, of course." *Smiles.*

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you."

Walking on...

Elder Sister Maid shudders.

Disciple Bard: "What is it?"

Elder Sister Maid: "No, it's at times like this that I feel you've been travelling for really long."

Disciple Bard: "Ah, that. I don't know very much about this place but bards like us travel a lot. If you don't travel, you can't really get inspiration. So I suppose I am used to it."

Elder Sister Maid: "I see."

Disciple Bard: "Shall we stay in the city tonight?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Umm. It's still afternoon. I was thinking of making some money first, but..."

Disciple Bard: "What will you do?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I was thinking of being a scribe."

Disciple Bard: "A scribe?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes, writing on behalf of other people... There aren't a lot of people who know how to write. Apart from writing words, I also help to conduct negotiations."

Disciple Bard: "Negotiations?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah, a scribe usually writes letters or books but sometimes I also write things which ordinary people don't deal with on a daily basis. For example, when people have requests they want to convey to the Lords, of course I help in drafting the official letters which they send, but apart from just the writing, sometimes they also bring me along for the official negotiations. Sometimes, I also have to read the replies of old women who have written letters to their sons dispatched far away within the army. Sometimes, I also help in writing romantic love letters too."

Disciple Bard: "Love letters! I think I should be rather good at those!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Then perhaps we can write those together."

Disciple Bard: "Indeed! It seems to me that being a scribe needs quite a lot of different expertise, doesn't it? You know quite a lot, then."

Elder Sister Maid: "I suppose so. I realised that on my travels."

Disciple Bard: "I see, it's good that you can. So what will you do now?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm going to look for a church, and start from there... Ahh, there's one. Looks like a good-sized church."

Disciple Bard: "It's not very big, though?"

Elder Sister Maid: "If it's too big, then I would have to compete with all the other scribe in the city. I think that one is just the right size."

Disciple Bard: "Hmm."

Knock, knock.

Elder Sister Maid: "Excuse me, are you from the Church?"

Priest: "Yes, I am."

Elder Sister Maid: "I am a travelling scholar. I would like to pray at the church and also make some money for my travels, I was hoping to be allowed to work here as a scribe at least for tonight. This is my companion, a travelling bard."

The Disciple Bard bows.

Priest: "Two beautiful, young ladies. I understand. The home of the Spirit is open to you both."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you very much. This is just a little bit, but I hope it can help to express some of my gratitude."

Coins jingle...

Priest: "Thank you. Much appreciated! There is an old but sturdy wooden table over there where you may do your work."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you."

Priest: "Miss..."

Disciple Bard: "Yes?"

Priest: "I have never seen such a colour of hair before. May I inquire where..."

Elder Sister Maid: "She comes from a place very far to the Northeast. They're a people who love to sing and dance in the forests... The Dryad people, if I'm not wrong?"

The Disciple Bard nods.

Priest: "I see..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Having come from very far away, we believers are like lost sheep. The charity of the Spirit is always shown to travellers like ourselves."

Priest: "...Well, very good. Please work hard."

Elder Sister Maid: "Thank you very much."

Walks away.

Disciple Bard: "Hey, umm..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes?"

Disciple Bard: "You were really smooth back there. Are you some kind of nobility?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Ahh... One of my brothers was a real alcoholic. He taught this to me."

Disciple Bard: "Brothers?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes, my Mistress kept a few apprentices in the manor and taught them different things. I came to know them as my brothers."

Disciple Bard: "I see... That seems very familiar."

Elder Sister Maid: "Does it?"

Disciple Bard: "And that thing about the Dryads just now..."

Elder Sister Maid: "In any case, we seem to have lied. I should really go and

apologise to the Spirit later. But it seems they're the kind of people who judge based on where you come from and not on who you are. Surely the Spirit will be understanding. Your hair is a splendid shade of autumn orange, it's really long and gorgeous and very exotic looking. He must have been surprised by it, don't worry too much."

Disciple Bard: "Umm. Don't tell me..."

Old Woman: "Can I get someone to write this for me?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah. A customer."

Disciple Bard: "What should I do?"

Elder Sister Maid: "You could go get customers. You should play some quiet, relaxing music to calm everybody down."

Disciple Bard: "Understood."

Elder Sister Maid: "Let's get to work!"

————— The Construction Works at the Portal

Disciple Engineer: "How is it?"

Fiend Builder: "No problems up to number six!"

Labourer: "Bridge number seven is slightly damaged."

Giant Builder: "The stone bridge... has crumbled..."

Disciple Engineer: "Is anybody injured?"

Fiend Builder: "They're resting at the dormitories but apart from a few knocks and some minor cuts, it seems everybody is fine."

Labourer: "Thank the Spirit."

Giant Builder: "Yeah..."

Disciple Engineer: "It's great that we were informed quickly by the Fairies."

Fiend Builder: "The bridges are fine but the venue is all messed up."

Labourer: "This wasn't designed for such a large army to pass through."

Giant Builder: "We're... still not... finished."

Disciple Engineer: "Alright! Let's pack up!"

Fiend Builder: "Eh?"

Labourer: "But the sun is still high up in the sky?!"

Disciple Engineer: "We'll continue tomorrow. I'm sure this news must have reached the city by now. The Middle Aged Merchant should know about it. Let's go have a meal. Don't let our spirits be dampened!"

Fiend Builder: "Yes."

Disciple Engineer: "Return to the dormitories. Let's have dinner outside today. Make some potato soup and have a huge hotpot. Make sure to add lots of meat and vegetables. Today I'm buying three drinks for everybody!"

Labourer: "Ohh! How generous, my Lord!"

Giant Builder: "Got it... Thank you!"

Disciple Engineer: "Alright, leave everything you can't carry by hand. I'm going to go see the injured people."

Fiend Builder: "Understood!"

Labourer: "Let's go!"

Giant Builder: "Then... I'll carry the carriage."

Walks off.

Disciple Engineer: (Alright... I can't let them get disheartened, we've still got work to do. Take a break and everything will start again tomorrow. We've got to

finish those stone bridges... but the Demons of the Pale are headed to the surface... Hey, Disciple Bard. What are you doing now? Are you alright? Don't go crazy. I hope you find what you were looking for...)

----- **The Winter Palace, the Study**

The Lone Winter King: "What?! In just one night..."

Seneschal: "That can't be..."

Messenger: "My Lord, the City of White Night has fallen."

The Lone Winter King: "I know it has. You may go."

Messenger: "Yes!"

Runs off.

The Lone Winter King: "..."

Seneschal: "Your Majesty, I will make contact with the Kingdom of Metal and the Kingdom of Ice. We will defend the Tripartite Union."

The Lone Winter King: "Too late."

Seneschal: "Eh?"

The Lone Winter King: "Attendant! Get a fast horse!"

Attendant: "Yes!"

The Lone Winter King: "Send a messenger to the Village of Wintering! Tell the Scholar that the Kingdom of White Night has fallen to the Demons. She should understand, go now!"

The Lone Winter King: "Seneschal!"

Seneschal: "Yes!"

The Lone Winter King: "I will lead 150 cavalrymen. We will first go to the Palace of metal. The Headquarters of the Tripartite Union is moved to the Kingdom of Metal. Under these circumstances, if we don't keep a sufficient distance between the frontline and the headquarters, we will certainly perish. We cannot afford to lose any time. Prepare to reinforce our allies, reorganise the city watch, reduce the guard to its minimum. I want a force of 1,500 infantry men prepared."

Seneschal: "Yes!"

The Lone Winter King: "Once you've prepared the force, march them to the Kingdom of Metal. How long will that take?"

Seneschal: "We will be able to move in three days."

The Lone Winter King: "Hurry it up. It's still spring so keep the equipment light. Leave all *supply* matters to the Disciple Merchant. Have the soldiers take the minimum amount of grain with them to the Kingdom of Metal. Make sure that you organise a few cavalry units as scouting units."

Seneschal: "Understood!"

The Lone Winter King: "I will be heading to the Kingdom of Metal. Make sure we stay in contact!"

Seneschal: "Yes!"

Attendant: "Understood!"

The Lone Winter King: "Demons... Just what does this all mean."



Supply: In the military, this refers to the provision of food and ammunition to the frontlines. In order for these to be done, militaries must devote a significant amount of manpower to creating supply units.

Chapter 6, “This is what the Fairies want.”

——— The Kingdom of the Lake, the Headquarters of the Union

Union Employee: “Has the war begun?”

Female Union Employee: “All the employees in the Headquarters have been assembled.”

Acting Chief: “Yeah.”

Union Employee: “The objective this time is—”

Acting Chief: “This time, silence is important.”

Female Union Employee: “Metal, then.”

Union Employee: “The market prices have risen as of late.”

Acting Chief: “It seems the Central Continent and the Holy Empire have started buying up large quantities of weaponry to prepare for the war. We are to apply pressure on this.”

Union Employee: “Then our funds will...”

Acting Chief: “The Councillor has come up with an estimate... Roughly 10,000 gold pieces.”

Female Union Employee: “On a much smaller scale than the wheat issue.”

Union Employee: “To begin with, metal is much more expensive, so the volume of flow is much smaller.”

Acting Chief: “At the same time, we are also to apply pressure on coal.”

Female Union Employee: “You mean the fuel? Charcoal?”

Acting Chief: “No, this is a directive from the Councillor.”

Female Union Employee: “That seems very suspicious.”

Union Employee: "I will go and receive the reports."

Acting Chief: "Use a quick horse."

Union Employee: "Yes."

Acting Chief: "We need to buy up transit and procurement rights for the coal to stop others from getting their hands on it. Most of it is to come from the North."

Female Union Employee: "Understood."

Runs in.

Union Employee: "The war has begun."

Acting Chief: "Indeed."

Union Employee: "There is no way we can stop it."

Acting Chief: "Wars were never things which required mutual consent. War is a completely unilateral action. As long as one person in the group of people who are involved in this war wants it, the war will take place. They're very extreme things, wars."

Union Employee: "Yes."

Acting Chief: "I'm fairly interested in that young Councillor. He has been achieving all sorts of impossible things and advancing without ever giving up. More than putting an end to this war, perhaps it is more important to appear to be *trying* to put an end to the war."

— — — The Kingdom of Elm, the Quarters of Nobility

Weak Nobleman: "This year's taxes have all been collected."

Middle Aged Knight: "..."

Powerful Landlord: "I have something to say about that. With this level of taxes, all the serfs are going to starve to death."

Weak Nobleman: "Are you suggesting the taxes are unreasonable!"

Powerful Landlord: "But with the poor harvest this year from the heat..."

Weak Nobleman: "Shut up! What do you mean poor harvest! Every fief has been blessed with great amounts of wheat and barley, right?!"

Powerful Landlord: "But the wells in my land have dried up..."

Weak Nobleman: "Who would believe such a thing?"

Middle Aged Knight: "Hahaha."

Powerful Landlord: "...It's the truth."

Weak Nobleman: "What a lie. You can just sell the wheat you harvested last winter this spring and use that money."

Powerful Landlord: "That's..."

Weak Nobleman: "That's what you get for trying to deceive us into believing this story about a poor harvest."

Powerful Landlord: "It is just as I told you..."

Weak Nobleman: "What?"

Powerful Landlord: "This year's taxes are collected not in produce but in cash..."

Weak Nobleman: "Well, fine."

Powerful Landlord: "In that case I'll pay. I'll get you the 70 gold pieces immediately."

Weak Nobleman: "What are you talking about? The tax is 210 gold pieces."

Powerful Landlord: "Huh?"

Weak Nobleman: "210 gold pieces? Just as it is written in the laws."

Powerful Landlord: "But that's in the old currency, right? As you are aware, the

new currency is worth 3 times as much as the old one..."

Weak Nobleman: "That may be so, but where in the laws does it say that the rate of tax is adjusted based on currency? As the law is written, based on the value of your land and property, you are to pay a tax of 210 gold pieces."

Powerful Landlord: "Do the noblemen want the peasants to die!"

Weak Nobleman: "Do not pretend to stand up for the rights of the weak when it is convenient for you!" *Slams table.*

Powerful Landlord: "Even if you say something like that, if the tax is insufficient, then I'll have to compensate with a significant bribe, right? In the end, we're all in the same boat. I intend to pay, it's just that I hope you will be able to reconsider the..."

Weak Nobleman: "Come on!"

Powerful Landlord: "!"

Middle Aged Knight: "My Lord, stay your hand."

Weak Nobleman: "Ah."

Middle Aged Knight: "We will never accomplish anything by being so heavy handed."

Powerful Landlord: "Please help, Sir Knight!"

Weak Nobleman: "Fine, then what?"

Middle Aged Knight: "In a situation like this, we have to listen to our friends. There's only one way I can think of getting around this."

Weak Nobleman: "...Which is?"

Middle Aged Knight: "Attack. We'll follow the coast and plunder the lands of the Kingdom of Winter."

Weak Nobleman: "You intend for us to be pirates!"

Middle Aged Knight: "I have no gripe with piracy. But of course, we will not officially sanction it. This is not piracy. This is privateering. We are not pirates, we are privateers. There's a difference."

Powerful Landlord: "Then..."

Weak Nobleman: "Hmm."

Powerful Landlord: "Our land does not have very much, but we do have bandits. If we could tame them and have them ride against the heretical Kingdoms, taking some financial help along the way... I do believe we can support them with weapons and the like."

Weak Nobleman: "Hmm, this is worth considering."

Middle Aged Knight: "Then let us see what those cowards can do against us."

— — — **By the Borders of the Holy Imperial City, in a Small House at Night**

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Disciple Bard: "... ..."

Disciple Bard: (Ahh. Mmm... It's still... night?)

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Disciple Bard: (Has the Elder Maid Sister woken up...)

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Disciple Bard: (Is she crying...?)

Elder Maid Sister: "..."

Disciple Bard: (Why...?)

Elder Maid Sister: "...Sorry... ..."

Disciple Bard: (...Is this about this afternoon? What is she going on about?)

Elder Maid Sister: "...Sorry... I can't save you... Sorry..."

Disciple Bard: (Elder Maid Sister...)



**E
x
p
l
a
n
a
t
i
o
n**

Privateering: In effect, it is exactly the same as piracy. However, it is sanctioned by a country and is directed towards merchant vessels or caravans of an enemy country. If captured by the enemy country, they may be tried and executed as pirates; but the sanctioning country is likely to treat them as heroes.

— — — The Borders of the Holy Empire, a Village of the Children of Light

Lieutenant of Light: "Forward, march!"

Marching.

Lieutenant of Light: "Fall in!"

Forming.

Healthy Peasant Soldier: "..."

Young Peasant Soldier: "Alright."

Lieutenant of Light: "Fore!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Lieutenant of Light: "Stand down! Clean and prepare equipment!"

Clattering of muskets.

Holy Imperial General: "How is it going?"

Lieutenant of Light: "Sir, everything is proceeding smoothly, sir."

Holy Imperial General: "Are we seeing results?"

Lieutenant of Light: "Our current objective is to march 16km in a day."

Holy Imperial General: "Hmm."

Lieutenant of Light: "What do you think?"

Holy Imperial General: "Train them a bit more. The current pace is not a problem, however, on the battlefield, speed decides life and death. I need the Heavy Brigades to move at a speed of at least 32km over two continuous days."

Lieutenant of Light: "And the punishment for failure is execution?"

Holy Imperial General: "It's fine, this is training. But the first unit which is able to meet the mark shall be entitled to two days of leave. Keep a record of the longest distances achieved and we can make something of that."

Lieutenant of Light: "Understood."

Holy Imperial General: "How about the range training?"

Lieutenant of Light: "Yes. About that."

Holy Imperial General: "Is there a problem?"

Lieutenant of Light: "The amount of black powder provided is insufficient."

Holy Imperial General: "Even though we had planned for it..."

Lieutenant of Light: "We had set aside an appropriate amount in the planning phase but we are using them at a much faster speed than expected. I would like to request an increase in the stocks of black powder."

Holy Imperial General: "Understood. I can't promise you anything but I will try."

Lieutenant of Light: "I thank you deeply."

Holy Imperial General: "Hey."

Lieutenant of Light: "Yes?"

Holy Imperial General: "This Village has had the best performances out of all its neighbours. As a result, I want you to make dinner special tonight. The practical achievements have been good. You have been true to the pride of these serfs as adherents of the Light."

Lieutenant of Light: "Yes! Thank you for your encouragement!"

——— Mountain Ridge on the Border of the Kingdom of Metal

Scout: "Coming in! Two thousand cavalrymen!!!"

Disciple Soldier: "Two thousand..."

Metal Lieutenant: "So few."

Disciple Soldier: "According to our reports, the Demon forces that invaded the City of White Night number less than three thousand. There is a significant number of cavalrymen among them. Two thousand is few, but..."

Metal Lieutenant: "But this does not bode well for us."

Disciple Soldier: "..."

Metal Lieutenant: "What is it?"

Disciple Soldier: "What is the distance? When will we be in contact with the enemy?"

Scout: "They are between the two ridges. Estimated time to contact, five minutes."

Disciple Soldier: "Confirm if the other border patrols have experienced any strange occurrences or sudden attacks!"

Metal Messenger: "Yes!"

Scout: "I will scout ahead."

Disciple Soldier: "Carry on."

Metal Lieutenant: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "This could just be a probe for our strength."

Metal Lieutenant: "Sorry?"

Disciple Soldier: "By sending out a small force to engage us, they can gain intelligence and gauge our abilities, equipment, and formations. They managed to take the City of White Night in a single night, but this time they appear to be taking more precautions."

Metal Lieutenant: "But won't that unit suffer casualties?"

Disciple Soldier: "They will retreat. To begin with, the Demons can afford such casualties, especially because it is unlikely that we will be locked in a battle of extermination."

Metal Lieutenant: "Five minutes..."

Disciple Soldier: "We have time."

Metal Lieutenant: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "And the catapults?"

Metal Lieutenant: "We have one or two of them on hand."

Disciple Soldier: "Prepare the catapults!"

Metal Lieutenant: "If you used the catapults in such a narrow ridge, you could bring down the cliff walls!"

Disciple Soldier: "That's fine. Our soldiers are the best in the world at building roads, aren't we?"

Metal Lieutenant: "That might be the only thing we are good at."

Metal Soldier: "Catapults prepared and ready to fire. Where should we take them to?"

Disciple Soldier: "Push them forward. Your target is the cliff wall on the right-hand side! It's fine even if you bring it down. My intention is for you to bury the forest so prepare for continuous fire!"

Metal Soldier: "Yes!"

Disciple Soldier: "What a wasteland."

Metal Lieutenant: "I understand. In that battle, the entirety of the Kingdom of White Night fell to the Demons. The same will happen to us if we do not maintain this border. It would be foolish to engage in a series of small skirmishes leading to a war of attrition."

— — — — The Holy Imperial City, a House on the Outskirts

Disciple Bard: "It's fairly run down."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "But the Church is like this, after all?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Eh?"

Disciple Bard: "I mean, I've travelled to many places in the Continent, but the Church can be found in just about everywhere."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah, I suppose so."

Disciple Bard: "The Spirit of Light? God? Even though they believe in the same God, there are quite a few varieties, aren't there?"

Elder Sister Maid: "It is basically the same faith, but there are differences in interpretations and practical applications, which steadily add up to greater

separations. These are manifested on the surface level in the form of different religious Orders. Broadly, they are the same thing, but on the finer details, there are definitely differences."

"For example, there are some religious Orders that place a special emphasis on religious days, rituals, and masses; there are also some religious Orders that are more concerned with being on the ground and helping the masses. The Church may seem to be a venue for faith and worship, but in truth, they also preside over matters of learning, medicine, and other difficulties in the lives of men, serving also as a public place."

Disciple Bard: "So that's why everybody pays so much attention to the Church."

Elder Sister Maid: "Indeed."

Disciple Bard: "But... the Church really is everywhere."

Elder Sister Maid: "That— Well... In a way, there's nothing for it."

Disciple Bard: "Really?"

Elder Sister Maid: "The Church of the Holy Spirit Light, also known as the Central Church, is incredibly powerful. Usually, when one refers simply to 'the Church', you are referring to the biggest faction in the organization. In the Central Continent, more than half of all adherents come under the influence of the Central Church."

"Actually, even though people may live in the lands of various kingdoms or nobility, their land may belong jointly to these lords, but also often to the Church. That is why the Church is able to exercise such a supreme influence over every part of their lives. Since the Church is such a massive organisation, even countries are unable to ignore it and must constantly respect its authority, without which they cannot govern their people. All the Church needs to do is to proclaim you a heretic and you would no longer have the mandate to own lands or to govern your people and your bloodline would forever be tainted from that day thenceforth."

Disciple Bard: "How monstrous."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah. For this reason, the Church, especially the Church of the Holy Spirit of Light, wields immense power. If this power were to be applied justly, it would be able to protect the people from the barbaric actions of ruthless nobility or monarchies... However, in truth, the nobilities and royalties are patrons of the Church, and the serfs and settlers have to suffer the most. Moreover, with the abilities at their disposal, they are also able to control the flow of information and technology... more so considering the large number of clergymen who are just out to improve their own lots in life."

Disciple Bard: "So that's why they can afford to have such an arrogant attitude."

Elder Sister Maid: "Indeed..."

Disciple Bard: "What do you think? If they could just get rid of that attitude, they might actually be a potent force for good."

Elder Sister Maid: "I would certainly respond very favourably to that."

Disciple Bard: "Wow, it's sparkling."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's amazing."

Disciple Bard: "Wonderful."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah." *Smiles.*

Disciple Bard: "It's just sparkling in gold."

Elder Sister Maid: "It's more magnificent than that palace."

Disciple Bard: "You've seen a palace?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Oh, umm. Just a bit."

Disciple Bard: "I don't even see any pillars without carvings on them."

Elder Sister Maid: "My eyes are so dazzled. Just how big is this place?"

Disciple Bard: "Well, just by looking at it, it appears to be at least a thousand paces in breadth, with the main buildings constructed from stone and plaster."

The basilica appears to be that building with the pillars covered in *Frescoes*. Gold leaf inlays. Carvings are of trees and nature, done by hand. With a first-rate team of master artists, sculptors, and builders, this must have taken at least 20 years to complete!"

Elder Sister Maid: "You're very knowledgeable about this!"



Fresco: This refers to the practice of painting a wall with plaster and then shaping it into a sculpture before the plaster dries. This is usually done on walls which are intended to stand for a long time and hence, failure is not permitted. If the fresco fails, the wall must be stripped of its plaster and redone from scratch.

Disciple Bard: "Well, I knew a very useless engineer."

Elder Sister Maid: "I expected it to be a lot bigger, with a massive piazza made from tiles or something."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah. Those sorts of churches are more common."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "What should we do?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I guess we have no choice."

Disciple Bard: "Looks like we should just give up. Even though we came all the way here."

Elder Sister Maid: "We'll infiltrate it."

Disciple Bard: "Eh?"

Elder Sister Maid: "We'll enter quietly. I've got some black clothing."

Disciple Bard: "Ehh?!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes?"

Disciple Bard: "For real?!"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Disciple Bard: "Why do you think this is a good idea?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Why... I think I've been influenced by the Hero."

Disciple Bard: "?"

Elder Sister Maid: "No, I've been in the company of some very brash people."

Disciple Bard: "Please be more serious about this."

Elder Sister Maid: "You're right. I've got to come up with a more serious and detailed infiltration plan."

Disciple Bard: "Yeah, we need to prepare. To begin with, we should get a basic schematics of the place, marking out where there are guards and where our final destination is."

Elder Sister Maid: "We'll spend some time earning travelling money and finding out more information. Thank you. You're very level-headed about all this."

Disciple Bard: "...Eh? Since when did I start supporting this infiltration plan?"

Elder Sister Maid: "This is really making me excited."

Disciple Bard: "Really?"

Elder Sister Maid: "The atmosphere is really strong..."

----- **The Kingdom of White Night, the Commandeered Palace of White Night**

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Hmm, and so they withdraw, huh."

General of the Pale: "What sort of punishment would you have me give them?"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "It's fine. In any case, their mission was reconnaissance. Even if the Kingdom of Metal destroys one mountain pass, they will not avoid this war. This report also gives good information. Are there any roads into the Kingdom which are wider, even if they are further away?"

General of the Pale: "Oi! Bring that map over here!"

Soldier of the Pale: "Yes!"

Lays out map.

Sigiled King of the Pale: "These are the mountains. And these are the forests. Are the forests here thickly wooded?"

Captured Minister: "...Yes... That is the Genesis Forest."

General of the Pale: "Our soldiers' movements will be slowed down in the dense vegetation."

Soldier of the Pale: "Your Majesty, can we not just simply use your powers to obliterate the enemy and seize what we need from them?"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Of course we can. As long as you are willing to face the Hero yourself."

Soldier of the Pale: "I apologise for the rudeness!"

General of the Pale: "—In any case."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "This route is passable by our Pale Cavalry and our Infantry units. How long do you think it will take for the Heavy Demons of the Pale to pass through it?"

General of the Pale: "Between 10-12 days. The mountain ranges in this World are much more dangerous than those in the Underground World, but the roads are fine."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Assemble the cavalry. Have them scout out the terrain in this area. If they meet any humans, they are to kill them all. It would be troublesome if they discovered our intentions."

General of the Pale: "Then the battle will take place on these plains here."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "The Plains of Scilla. — Oi! What is Scilla?"

General of the Pale: "Answer!" *Kicks*.

Captured Minister: "...Scilla is a type of grass. It begins white and turns purple when it flowers... Those plains... are covered in them..."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "Purple, huh."

General of the Pale: "How auspicious. The colour of the Pale."

Sigiled King of the Pale: "I must meditate before my battle with the Hero."

General of the Pale: "Yes!"

Sigiled King of the Pale: "I'm sure you know what to do next. To control this country, all we need are about 2,000 soldiers to garrison it. Form a Commissary, use the strategy we talked about."

General of the Pale: "Yes. As you wish!"



Chinese Squill: A plant in the squill family which grows on large plains. The flowers bloom a lovely shade of violet and the roots may be eaten as well. In Japan, they are also known as *Sandaigasa* (Palace Visit Umbrellas) because when the retainers of the Emperor visit him in the Palace on busy days, the number of

umbrellas held by their servants resemble a plain of blooming squills.

Commissary: In the Army, these refer to units which are placed behind the frontlines to ensure that their own soldiers follow orders and do not attempt to desert the battlefield. If they show signs of resistance to following orders or cowardice, they can attack them from behind. Since they would be attacked by their own soldiers from behind, which is less well-defended, soldiers hence prefer to attack the enemy which is in front of them. This can help to provide a critical morale boost in tight situations, but is really only required in situations in which the soldiers already have dismal morale and are likely to shatter and desert.

— — — The Demon World, the Conference of Khans

The Silver Tiger Lord: “The Demon King.”

The Baron of Steel: “Welcome back!”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “Congratulations on your recovery!”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “It is a relief to see you in full health.”

The Demon King: “Eh, ah. Well... thank you.”

The Chief Maid: “Well, Your Majesty. Please take a seat.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “The Demon King has recovered.”

The Baron of Steel: “Mmm.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “That is a big weight off my shoulders.”

The Demon King: “To the wise and noble Khans who have been present at this Conference from its very beginning, I the Thirty-Fourth Demon King, Ruby Eyes, sincerely offer you my gratitude. — I would first like to apologise for my irresponsible leave of absence from this job, and also my thanks and

appreciation for the wise actions undertaken by the Khans in my stead. I have heard very much from the Hero, who in his office as the Black Knight, has confirmed the incredible aptitude of the khans in the many Conferences which have taken place. With regards to the decisions made by the Khans, I do not find any errors nor lapses in your judgements. I think that they were highly mature and experienced decisions."

"The Silver Tiger Lord, the Baron of Steel, the Queen of Fairies, the Khan of the Gate, the Witch-Queen of Banshees, the Chieftain of the Tattooed, and the Cyclops. I thank you deeply. I would like to especially thank the Fire Dragon Lord for consolidating and presiding over the Conference. You have all done a splendid job."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Please, do not be so humble."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "It was the bare minimum of our duties."

The Cyclops: "It is... better... for the Demon King to rule."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Hahaha. Once you say it like that, all the troubles, stressing, and discomforts I've had with the position have melted away."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "May I ask how are your wounds?"

The Chief Maid: "Allow me to answer on her behalf. The bandages remain in place but the Demon King is now capable of a normal diet. Her Majesty will require further treatment, which we expect will continue for a month. She will not be able to take to the battlefield, but I do not believe this will interfere with her daily duties."

The Demon King: "It is as she says."

The Chief Maid bows.

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Then there's almost no problem at all."

The Baron of Steel: "Mmm."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "Your Majesty, this Council has now served its purpose. Shall I return the full authority back to you?"

The Demon King: "No, keep it. Right now, our issues have gotten much larger in scale and we cannot afford the time lapse between decisions on each of the matters."

The Queen of Fairies: "Do you speak of the Demons of the Pale?"

The Demon King: "In order to resolve this crisis, this Council will require its authority."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "...Mmm."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Your Majesty. How should we react to the invasion of the Human World by the Demons of the Pale?"

The Demon King: "That's right. Hmm... Khan of the Gate. You are familiar with both the Human World and the Demon World and you are also highly experienced on military matters in both Worlds. Please tell me, what do you think about the present situation?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Hmm."

Aide-de-Camp: "Come on."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Firstly, according to what I've heard, there remains approximately 160,000 Demons of the Pale in their home territory. To put it bluntly, they have been discarded... or so it would appear."

The Baron of Steel: "How pitiful. They do not even know that they have been discarded."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Indeed."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Hmm."

The Queen of Fairies: "Our intelligence units which have been active on an extremely covert basis have reported that it appears that most of the food has been appropriated by the military. Furthermore, gold and military supplies were

also taken from the population.”

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: “The Demons of the Pale have many mines, they have the most gold in the Demon World.”

The Queen of Fairies: “The intelligence units were not able to ascertain why this has taken place.”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Next, we must consider the military movement of the Demons of the Pale. This I can understand. Before their hands get tied down, they intended to take the first strike.”

“At present, it would be difficult for them to sustain conflict against the combined armies of the entire Demon World... Well, the existence of the Hero also forces them to be wary. We must consider that their original goals appear to have been to kill the Demon King, install their own King as the Demon King, and then purge the Khans so that they can rule the Demon World as a tyrannical dictatorship.”

“However, we should also consider that there could have been coalitions forming to deal with the Demons of the Pale. For example, the Tribe of the Fang and the Tribe of Automatons could join forces and propel the Demon World into a massive bipolar battle. There are many other possible scenarios but in the end, it would likely grind down into a large stalemate and a war of attrition.”

“At this Conference, we have made many decisions, but we have not yet considered what we would do if we had lost. On the other hand, it appears that the Demons of the Pale have considered it before making any of their moves and so are now applying it.”

The Baron of Steel: “So, they attack the Human World...”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “That is correct. They attack the Human World. If you think about the results, it is not such a bad plan. Of course, that is what the Demons of the Pale think as well. I've heard this as rumours from above but it seems that the rapid speed of the invasion by the Demons of the Pale has resulted in the capitulation of a country known as the Kingdom of White Night.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “An entire Kingdom?”

The Queen of Fairies: “Did they bring that much power with them?”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Yes. It is one of Four Kingdoms known as the Southern United Kingdoms. Due to many reasons, they had been constantly initiating failed battles with their surrounding countries and as a result were seriously lacking in military power. That is the Kingdom of White Night. This country had the misfortune of facing the Demons of the Pale first. Their City could not even resist them for a day.”

“The results are that the Demons of the Pale are able to achieve enough in the Surface World. The Surface World is very different from the Demon World, but it is at war. The Southern Kingdoms are fighting with the Central Continent. To put it differently, right now, they do not want to be fighting the Demons. Seizing this gap, they took down the weakest country and established a foothold.”

“In different circumstances, if the Humans all combined their powers to deal with them, it may be possible to rapidly defeat the Demons of the Pale. However, it is more likely that they will take advantage of the war with the Demons of the Pale to attack their own fellow Humans.”

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: “...”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “That is what I feel about the present situation. Having thought about it, it appears that the Demons of the Pale are broadening their territory in the Surface World. They've thrown away their lands in the Demon World and did not leave themselves a route for retreat. When they do return to the Demon World, the situations may have changed considerably and the gap in our military mights may have been significantly reduced as well.”

The Hero: “An accurate analysis.”

The Demon King: “Something we have to consider is collusion.”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “Collusion?”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “What do you mean?”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “They may be receiving information from

the Surface World. The Kingdom of White Night had just launched a failed assault on its neighbours and had not at all recovered. The decentralisation of the Kingdom had marginalised many groups of noblemen and the borders of the Kingdom had also become sketchy. They were no longer able to control large parts of their country and had become a failed state.”

“And amidst all of this, they were attacked. It was the perfect secret attack. Where did a Tribe of Demons gain such comprehensive knowledge of the Human World? The fact that they had estimated that they would only require 20,000 soldiers and could further travel at such speed meant that they must have some kind of information regarding the strength of the country as well as its terrain and weather.”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “You are saying that there are Humans working for the Demons of the Pale?”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Yes.”

The Demon King: “Well, there are informants no matter where you are. I'm sure my Khans also have their own ways of finding out what happens in the Human World, do you not? This informant is on a much larger scale, such as rendering reinforcements to the Demons of the Pale... It's a terrible thought.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “The war on the Surface...”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Hmm.”

The Demon King: “According to reliable sources, the probability seems high that the informant is none other than the Kingdom of White Night itself.”

The Queen of Fairies: “What do you mean?”

The Demon King: “In other words, this might be a situation where the Kingdom originally intended to collaborate with the Demons in order to regain their lands and prestige but ended up being attacked by surprise.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Hmm. Why are they such a pathetic people? This Kingdom of White Night?”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Yeah. They are.”

The Demon King: "This may seem to be a terrible thing to happen to anyone, but in a way, it was what they had coming for them, and there's also a problem with it. Namely, now that the Demons of the Pale have obliterated the Kingdom of the White Night, they have no friends in the Surface World."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Hmm."

The Demon King: "What I'm really scared of is a different possibility. To simplify the war in the Human World, it's basically a war between the South and the Central Continent. The latter may have contracted the Demons of the Pale."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "What is the reason they are at war?"

The Hero: "It wasn't really a war at first. However, the Southern United Kingdoms was the frontline of the war against the Demon World. On the other hand, the Central Continent was hiding safely behind the lines profiting from it. In order to protect the Central Continent, the impoverished Southern United Kingdoms shed a lot of blood. This conflict of interests soon deepened."

The Demon King: "However, the real reason why they are at war with each other, more than what was stated above, is a disagreement over the direction the country should be heading in on various matters."

"The countries of the Central Continent want an all-out war with the Demon World. However, in order to achieve this, they will need to manipulate or otherwise suppress the countries of the South, which are near to the Portal. To begin with, the Central Continent has always had a lot of pride, and even without this war, they would have sought to bring the South under their sway one way or another. However, due to economic and trade reforms, the South grew in power until they were eventually able to break free from the reins of the Central Continent."

"At present, there are two major ideological points of contention. Firstly, the South believes in the emancipation of the serfs whereas the Central Continent recognises and promotes serfdom. The South seeks a ceasefire with the Demon World and the Central Continent is attempting to wage an all-out war against us, or at the very least, launch military expeditions against us."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "How troublesome."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "It's even more complicated once the lid has been lifted."

The Demon King: "This is the same in any world. Where there are many people, there are bound to be differences. There's no way they could all be thinking the same way."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "But that must mean that the Pale represents a significant turning point for the Human World."

The Demon King: "That is correct."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "It was the Humans who first invaded the Demon World. Are you saying that not all Humans are trying to plunder the wealth of the Demon World?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "This is definitely not about wealth. Well, this matter is a result of the immense power of the Church."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "The Church, as in the people who run the temples?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Yes. The Church in the Surface World is a far more organised, far more persuasive organisation than the Clan of Temples in the Demon World but they are still basically the same thing. Countries, in other words, people, cannot escape from the grasp of the Church. The issue is that the Human World believes in only one god."

The Cyclops: "One?!"

The Hero: "Yeah, one. The Spirit of Light."

The Demon King: "—The Maiden of Fire."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "The Church has also been broadcasting things like, 'The Demons are evil! Kill them all!' They have witnessed the power of the Demon Beasts, which are just like those of the savage animals in the Human World, except bigger and much more dangerous. If these elements are exposed to the Human World, there is fear of much stronger violence."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Demon Beasts and Demons are not the same

things!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "I can understand this, but do you think the people in the Surface World will be able to tell the difference? They just think that you are all evil and savage barbarians."

"With the gate fully open, there could be a flood of marauders or wild Demon Beasts. And with everything that the Church has been telling them... the vast majority of the people in the Surface World, none of whom know a thing about the Demon World, are incredibly terrified. That is the truth."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Hmm..."

The Demon King: "Under these situations, with the aggression of the Demons of the Pale, we can expect that there will be a permanent effect on the relations between the Human and Demon World."

The Baron of Steel: "So the Human World could invade the Demon World again?"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

The Demon King: "The problem is not with invading the Demon World. Well, it's something we should be worried about, but it's only one possible conclusion. The real issue at hand is that the people living in the Human World will only have their fears confirmed and co-existence will be a much more difficult thing."

The Silver Tiger Lord growls.

The Baron of Steel: "..."

The Queen of Fairies: "That is troublesome."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Yeah."

The Demon King: "I understand that not all the Khans present here support the co-existence proposal. However, I would like you to consider it. There are two worlds, one on the surface and one underground. There is a chance that the Human World does not have the military power that we do. However, there is also a chance that we are equal or that they are stronger than we are. Is that

correct? There is no reason to decide that they are weaker than we are. That is the only thing which I can say definitively as the Demon King. Even if we win, even if we lose, this war will drag on for at least a hundred years."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "What you are trying to say is that you have a plan to avoid this all-out war?"

The Demon King: "I do not have a concrete plan."

The Queen of Fairies: "So you don't..."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "..."

The Demon King: "The central issue is that we are too different. Whether it be our complexions or our shapes, our lifestyles, the gods we believe in, the foods we eat. Our manners of dress, our societal rules, the respect we pay to the rituals we do. It would be incredible if we did not go to war. If we let things follow their natural course, we would definitely be at war right now."

The Baron of Steel: "..."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "..."

The Demon King: "However, I feel that if we can avoid a war then we definitely should. It's not because I am afraid of the Humans. If we fight, we must win. And I am willing to put in the effort to ensure our victory. — But is that what we want? My Khans. I feel that there is something else which we can do."

The Hero: "Silver Tiger Lord."

The Chief Maid: "?"

The Hero: "Don't you have something to say? It's better if you do. This is a Conference after all."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "—Hmm. Then let me say it. My people are a people of war... We do not have any reservations against a war with the Humans. We do not feel that there are any issues with beginning a war even if it lasts a hundred years. Whether it lasts a hundred years or even a thousand years, they are all the same to us. For honour and glory, it is better to fight a glorious war."

“However, it seems that the flute is now being blown by the Demons of the Pale. Is it possible that in the current situation... we are being deceived by the Pale into starting a war with the Humans?”

The Fire Dragon Lord: “Hmm, you could say that.”

The Baron of Steel: “...Mmm.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “The Tribe of the Fang believes that the order of battle should have us going to war with the Demons of the Pale first.”

The Queen of Fairies: “But that would necessitate invading the Human World.”

The Baron of Steel: “Wouldn't that unnecessarily make the situation even worse?”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “No, this is a truly brave decision! We the Tribe of the Gate are fully in support of the Great Tiger General. It is as he says, we must fight the Pale first. A wise decision! Great General!”

Aide-de-Camp: “Great General?!”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Ohh! You are calling me by that title as well!”

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: “Do you intend to start a hundred-year war with the Humans?!”

The Cyclops: “Humans... are scary...”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “But this is a matter of honour. You could say that we are only hunting a group of traitors who are pillaging the Human World. In that case, why should we hold back?”

The Demon King: “Witch-Queen of Banshees, Khan of Dragons, what is your take on this issue?”

The Fire Dragon Lord exhales.

The Witch-Queen of Banshees nods.

The Fire Dragon Lord: "We will support the decision of the Demon King."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Standing up to injustice. Using this reasoning, we may be able to cross into the Human World. If we are unable to communicate this to them, then perhaps Humans and Demons do not have any points of common agreement. Then we will inevitably be drawn to war."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Witch-Queen! Dragon Lord!"

The Demon King: "My Khans. If we continue to do nothing, the situation will get worse with every passing second. Do we have any other options apart from the gamble suggested by the Silver Tiger Lord?"

The Baron of Steel: "...We have no choice."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Your Majesty! Do you mean?!"

The Demon King: "Khans, you are about to witness the first Imperial Demon Expedition."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "And it will also be your first personally-commanded war."

The Demon King: "However, as an expedition, as we will be going to very distant lands, we cannot command such a large army. Silver Tiger Lord."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Yes!"

The Demon King: "You will command eight thousand elite soldiers and follow my leadership as my General of the Right."

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Haha!"

The Demon King: "Baron of Steel."

The Baron of Steel: "Yes."

The Demon King: "This is a difficult assignment but I am confident of your ability to do it. You are to enter the old lands of the Demons of the Pale and shut down the operation of the gold mines, ore mines, and workshops. You are also to secure the population and administer them peacefully. I will now entrust the

governership of all the natural resources of the old lands of the Demons of the Pale to the Tribe of Automatons. It is a historical fact that the Tribe of Automatons have been discriminated and oppressed due to their different shape. The pain that you have experienced is not understandable by the other Tribes. You will hence be the only Tribe which is capable of understanding the pain of the civilians who have been abandoned by their Khan and their Army."

The Baron of Steel: "Understood. I will do my best."

The Demon King: "Cyclops, Witch-Queen, Chieftain."

The Cyclops nods.

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Yes."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Yes."

The Demon King: "I greatly respect the decisions which have been made by my Khans. In order for us to bring vitality to the Demon World, I will require the strengths of your three Tribes. Whether the world will be thrown into war, or ushered into a new era of peace, we will require roads and new lands. Please combine your powers to develop our World."

The Witch-Queen of Banshees: "Yes, as you wish."

The Chieftain of the Tattooed: "Understood."

The Cyclops: "...Leave it to us."

The Demon King: "Fire Dragon Lord."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I understand."

The Demon King: "This Conference is what binds the Demon World together. While I am away in the Human World, as usual you will be in charge."

The Fire Dragon Lord: "I will uphold this promise until my old bones are broken into dust."

The Demon King: "Base Commander. The Human World will now be a stage. I

fully understand that the City of the Gate has a shortage of able soldiers. Take as many soldiers as you like and you will command them as my General of the Left. I will require your expertise and experience."

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Understood. You can entrust me with this."

The Queen of Fairies: "Umm... What about us?" *Smiles.*

The Demon King: "Queen of Fairies."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes!"

The Demon King: "You will be the cornerstone of this expedition."

The Queen of Fairies: "What do you mean?"

The Demon King: "We will march to attack the Tribe of the Pale. For this reason, we must pass through the Human World or rather, the various Kingdoms of the Human World. If we were to march into those lands fully equipped for war without explanation, it would definitely lead to all-out war with the Humans."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes..."

The Demon King: "You will be a special envoy, sent to the Kingdoms of the Human World to seek their permission."

————— The Holy Empire, Late at Night under the Cathedral

Footsteps echoing in the tunnels.

Disciple Bard: "...How nice."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Footsteps echoing.

Disciple Bard: "This smell is..."

Elder Sister Maid: "That's the smell of very old vellum."

Disciple Bard: "It looks like people don't come here very often."

Elder Sister Maid: "We should be thankful for that."

Footsteps.

Disciple Bard: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Bard: "Alright. Should we open it?"

Elder Sister Maid nods.

Door screeches...

Disciple Bard: "That door is in need of some oiling. It almost made my heart stop."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "Which one is it?"

Elder Sister Maid: "It's probably further down."

Footsteps echoing.

Disciple Bard: "This is the repository."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Disciple Bard: "What should we do?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Eh?"

Disciple Bard: "We've come all the way here. We should be looking for things on the Holy Relic. But is there anything else you would like to look for?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Then, the story from before?"

Disciple Bard: "About the Five Spirit Families?"

Elder Sister Maid: "I'm sure we'll be able to find something more detailed in here."

Disciple Bard: "Hmm. Got it."

Elder Sister Maid: "I'll put the light over here."

Clank.

Disciple Bard: "We've got..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Six hours till sunrise."

Disciple Bard: "That's not a lot of time."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Flipping pages.

Disciple Bard: (This girl... She's probably really special. She has a certain conviction in her step. I'm probably the same, but... that's because I have chosen to walk proudly along the path of music. What path has that girl chosen?)

The Legend of the Orb

A girl was born amidst the flames. With an invisible diadem shining brilliantly on her forehead. The infinite charity of this intelligent girl shone towards every existence in this world.

A boy was born on the ground. The holy child of a woman from a different world and a spirit. He would purge the world of the black evil it had become corrupted with.

Their young love was tempered amidst the flames of harsh training, and the promise they made burned in their chests.

They wished for wings. So they could be borne on the winds as they soared through the air.

As they grew, the two young ones who so loved the divine birds hid a treasure within their chest for the blood of humans, which was a great sin to the Spirits. This sin was— The hope for wings within their soul. To lock up time for their own purposes.

A shattered Orb fell onto the black world. The children who sought atonement saw mentors in the forbidden love of the young black sheep and became their disciples. Together, having been cursed and condemned by the Spirit King of the World, they sought to destroy the evil world.

What fell was the body. What died was life.

However, with the tragic shattering of the Orb, the world was split and fractured. The Spirits were now at war, and the cooperation between the Five Houses disappeared, peace was lost forever. As they warred with each other, the flames of war raged across the lands and they sank deeper into the abyss of destruction.

It was the girl who wished to save the World. The intelligent girl, born amidst the flames. The girl made a choice, and the choice was the world. She parted from the fingers of the boy she so loved and hugged the fragments of the Orb which remained; and so as to protect the lives of everybody in this world, her body turned into the purest of light.

Under her hands, which protected all life, she became our benevolent Lord.

——— The Holy Empire, in an Ancient Repository of Texts

Disciple Bard: “This is...?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yeah.”

Disciple Bard: “But what a sad story. Even though they were willing to go through so much for their love, just by being together, the world would be destroyed.”

Elder Sister Maid: “...”

Disciple Bard: “I suppose such a legend is normal in such chaotic times... I

suspect the descendants of that young man who destroyed the world would be victimised forever..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Really?"

Disciple Bard: "Eh?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Just to break up a young man and a young woman, the Five Spirit Families would be willing to sever ties and destroy each other? Do you think that could be possible?"

Disciple Bard: "I'm not sure... But it's just a legend after all."

Elder Sister Maid: "To begin with, there is only one Spirit. At least the Spirit which the Church talks about is only one person."

Disciple Bard: "Well, that Flame Spirit did eventually become light..."

Rummages.

Elder Sister Maid: "Ah."

Disciple Bard: "This was in the same scroll tube?"

Elder Sister Maid: "It's an ancient document? A contract?"

Disciple Bard: "This is... a drawing of a temple."

Elder Sister Maid: "Probably the blueprints. The portal between... The Fourth, 'Amber Flame', and the Primarch?"

Gushing sound.

Disciple Bard: "Hey."

Elder Sister Maid: "Blue... water?!"

Disciple Bard: "Ahhh, but I'm not getting wet. What is this?!"

Elder Sister Maid: "I don't know either!"

Gushing sound.

Disciple Bard: (Ahh. It's all blue... Like I'm drowning.)

Gushing sound.



Orb: In the Middle Ages, the orb was a symbol of authority for monarchs and the Church and was usually made from gold or other precious stones and metals. They would be used to decorate crowns and diadems. In many legends, it is often depicted as an item possessing great Demonic power as well.

Disciple Bard: “Golden sands... The waves cometh...”

Elder Sister Maid: (...What is with this light?)

Disciple Bard: “Elder Sister Maid, give me your hand.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Eh? Yes.”

Clink.

————— In a Dream filled with Light

The Spirit of Light: “...”

The Mage: “...”

The Spirit of Light: “.....”

The Mage: "...You finally called."

The Spirit of Light: "..."

The Mage: "...I have my hands. And my feet... My whole body. It is as the Hero said. This is the Dream of the Spirit."

The Spirit of Light: "...ro."

The Mage: "...What?"

The Spirit of Light: "...Hero."

The Mage: "Wrong."

The Spirit of Light: "...Hero... Save."

The Mage: "..."

The Spirit of Light: "...Hero... The World..."

The Mage: "..."

The Spirit of Light: "...Hero...This."

The Mage: "I've had enough of this."

The Spirit of Light: "...Hero."

The Mage: "Shut the hell up!"

Magic blazes.

The Spirit of Light: "...He... He... He..."

The Mage: "What's with that depressed voice and that incessant crying! Are you just trying to take advantage of the Hero's kindness, you vixen! Do you think he's your tool? Do you know how much trouble you have brought!"

The Spirit of Light: "...This world... the weak... the innocent... people..."

The Mage: “I never thought that after perusing tens of thousands of texts, after finally making it to the Dream of Light, all I would get is this pathetic crying. Spirit—! It's true that the World was saved by you, but do you think you should have saved it?! Was it wrong to save something that should not have been saved?! Didn't you think that it was more correct to protect your love?”

“You... have probably never stood next to the Hero, so you don't know what it's like to— I never dreamed that you would be like this, and even though coming here has been a waste of time, allow me to say just one thing. This world will definitely shatter and crumble. It will never turn out the way that you want it to.”

The Spirit of Light: “...Save...this...dark world...”

The Mage: “...Right.”

The Mage: “...How meddlesome! Scum!”

————— The Kingdom of Winter, a Trading Village at the Outskirts

Colonist: “Stop! Someone stop this guy!”

Resourceful Young Man: “Do you really think I'll stop if you shout at me?”

Colonist: “You thief! Somebody!”

Resourceful Young Man: “Haha! Just you try to chase me! Hehe! I haven't eaten in a really long time so I'm really light!”

Little Sister Maid: “Hey.”

Resourceful Young Man: “Eh?”

Little Sister Maid attacks.

Resourceful Young Man: “What are you doing, you brat!”

Little Sister Maid: “Stealing is wrong, alright?”

Resourceful Young Man: “Shut up! Are you telling me to die then! I have to eat

this because my life depends on it!"

Running.

Colonist: "Catch him—"

Resourceful Young Man: "They've caught up! Get out of my way!"

Disciple Nobleman: "My, my. It's never good to steal eggs from a lady."

Resourceful Young Man: "Get out of my way, you drunkard. Wait, where's your wallet?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Just what do you intend to do with that pathetic knife?"

Little Sister Maid: "Uuuuuh. Disciple Noblemannnn."

Resourceful Young Man: "Crap! You're that guy."

Disciple Nobleman: "You run in a very inelegant manner." *Leaps through the air.*

Resourceful Young Man: "Eh?"

Little Sister Maid: "Ahh!"

Resourceful Young Man: "Ahhh, ahhh!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Hurry up and hide that lower body of yours, it's disgraceful."

Resourceful Young Man: "I'm going to cut you."

Disciple Nobleman: "Sure."

Kick.

Resourceful Young Man: "# 🏙 ` □ ☆ ㅂ §!"

Disciple Nobleman: "You have to kick these kinds of people."

Little Sister Maid: "That guy is blowing bubbles, isn't he?"

Colonist: *Pant, pant*, “Oh it's the Disciple Nobleman. Thank you very much! This damn thief!”

Disciple Nobleman: “No, no. I just happened to be passing by. If only someone would show me the way around this place.”

— — — The Kingdom of Metal, the Palace, in a Large Hall

The Iron Fist King: “...As a result, the forces defending our nation from the Demons have withdrawn from the mountain pass. However, the Kingdom of Metal and the Kingdom of White Night are separated by a long border of mountains and great rivers, along which they are now stationed. This is not a frontier easily traversable by man, but it seems it is where the Demons will lay their next attack.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “...”

The Female Paladin: “How are the forces of the Kingdom of Metal?”

The Iron Fist King: “Going by numbers alone, we have 60,000 soldiers, but a large number of these are colonists and refugees and are only soldiers in name. They've gone through some rudimentary training but they will not be applicable on a battlefield. The numbers we can properly field are closer to ten thousand men.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “The Kingdom of Ice can provide three thousand.”

Minister of Winter: “The Kingdom of Winter another 7,500.”

The Lone Winter King: “Even so, this is much larger than it was three years ago.”

The Iron Fist King: “However, no matter how desperate any country is, it will still require units to maintain law and order as well as police borders. So even if we totally mobilise all available forces, the three Kingdoms combined are likely only able to provide something like 10,000 soldiers.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “The problem is: What is the strength of the Demon army...?”

The Lone Winter King: "According to a reliable source of mine, the Demons which have suddenly attacked us from the Demon World belong to a radical faction known as the Demons of the Pale. They are a war-like Tribe that is led by a young King known as the Sigiled King who came to power by assassinating his father and seizing control of the military. He has commanded the most elite of his soldiers on his attack on the Human World and they number 25,000 strong."

The Iron Fist King: "Hmm."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Demons of the Pale..."

The Lone Winter King: (This information comes from the old man...)

Minister of Winter: "Even so, this means there are 20,000 of them. Fighting such a force could mean our complete annihilation."

The Iron Fist King: "Indeed."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

The Lone Winter King: "No, that's not completely necessary. The total population of our three Kingdoms is approximately 200,000. No matter how badly trained we are, if we enter into a War of Attrition and as long as the people of our three Kingdoms live, we have a strong possibility of lasting long enough to force the Demons to retreat."

Minister of Winter: "..."

The Female Paladin: "This is called a Scorched Earth tactic. At least that's what I heard from the Scholar... A Scorched Earth tactic is when in times of war, in order to defend against unfavourable odds, you burn or seize anything of value in the lands of which the invading army is going to attack, especially buildings and food, such that you deprive them of anything which can be of use to them. By attacking your own territories and removing all supplies available to the enemy, you can reduce the scale of battles, limit their scope, and erode the military ability of the aggressor."

The Iron Fist King: "Attacking your own territory..."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Burn and...seize...?"

The Female Paladin: "That is correct. With our land size and population, it would be easier to achieve victory in this way."

Minister of Winter: "But in this way—"

The Female Paladin: "Of course, the lands which we have taken great pains to cultivate, the lush and beautiful greenery of the South may return to savage wasteland unable to support life for the next ten years, maybe more. That is something that even we as the Holy Order of the Lake would not like to see happen."

The Lone Winter King: "..."

The Iron Fist King: "But no matter what, we have to drive the Demons back."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Have you not heard what is happening to those poor, innocent civilians in the Kingdom of White Night...?"

The Female Paladin: "But we don't really have the might..."

Minister of Winter: "Then it is clear that we must reduce the border security in other areas in order to focus on this war with the Demons."

The Iron Fist King: "Indeed."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

The Female Paladin: "But the Central Continent would be just as terrible to the Tripartite Union."

Minister of Winter: "Even so, the present timing is such that the Demons are our greatest threat."

The Lone Winter King: "..."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "It has become quite terrible indeed..."

The Lone Winter King: "Queen of Ice and Snow, what is the situation with the commissions from the other Kingdoms?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “The Kingdom of the Lake, the Kingdom of Branches, the Kingdom of Reeds, the Kingdom of Red Horses. The lords of other free trading cities have also expressed their willingness. The commissions have also been gathered.”

The Female Paladin: “...?”

The Lone Winter King: “This is the only timing.”

The Iron Fist King: “Shall we do it?”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “Then—”

The Lone Winter King: “Yeah. Henceforth, the Tripartite Union will now be changed in name to the Alliance of the South. At the same time, with the addition of the Kingdom of the Lake, the Kingdom of Branches, the Kingdom of Reeds, and the Kingdom of Red Horses, we will have to jointly enact many new policies. Our final objective is the unity and joint solidarity of the Kingdoms along joint ideals of emancipation, economic stability, and free trade.”

The Iron Fist King: “Mmm.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “These are the only things which we know we need to do for sure.”

The Female Paladin: “And will they be able to send reinforcements?”

Minister of Winter: “What should we do...”

The Lone Winter King: “If this does become a long war, rather than reinforcements, we will probably more appreciate the materiel and supplies they can send us. We can also expect the mustering of the Zealots. On top of that, the vaccinations against smallpox will enter their first phase this spring. By spreading this technology, the Holy Order of the Lake, with its headquarters in the Alliance, can probably grow throughout the Central Continent.”

“If the Alliance falls here, not just our three Kingdoms, but the entire Human World, will be in serious jeopardy. If the Kingdoms are capable of making correct judgments, then they will definitely provide us with reinforcements.”

The Iron Fist King: "But for that to happen, we will need more time."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Yes."

The Lone Winter King nods.

The Iron Fist King: "You can entrust the defence of the border to one of my boys. He's young but he's got an amazing head for command. He carries the name of the Minister of Defence and as a General, is a vital pillar of our army."

Minister of Winter: "How many does he command?"

The Iron Fist King: "No more than 3,500."

The Female Paladin: "Alright. The knights I command, the units from the Lone Winter King, as well as the infantry brigades from the Kingdom of Winter, we number a total of 2,000 strong. Another 3,000 men march again from the Kingdom of Winter. Together we have 5,000. I would also request the mustering of new units from the Kingdom of Metal."

The Iron Fist King: "As you wish. Then we will have... approximately 8,500."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "What of my Kingdom?"

The Female Paladin: "I am fully aware that the military organisation of the Kingdom of Ice is not strong. I request that you deploy whatever soldiers you have to patrol the borders of the Kingdom of Metal."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "I understand... I wonder where that wanderer is wandering about now."

The Female Paladin: "I will go. My Kings and Queens, do you have any objections?"

The Lone Winter King: "Thank you."

The Iron Fist King: "The General is the strongest in the Three Kingdoms. I know I can entrust him with anything."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "But the enemy outnumbers him two-to-one. They

are not a collection of overprivileged noblemen like the Central Continental Army, they are an elite force commanded by a young and cruel King..."

The Female Paladin: "It will be difficult to win. Even at the very best, we will not be able to avoid a terrible battle."

Minister of Winter: "..."

The Lone Winter King: "What do you think?"

The Female Paladin: "I have no intention to lose, but we cannot afford to hesitate... More importantly, we must make the correct decision. As far as I know, from the Holy Crusaders which invaded the Demon World and earlier with the Invasion of the Isle of Light, the Demons are not familiar with the rules and customs of war in the Human World. This does not mean that they do not have any rules or customs of war but they have their own disciplined methods which greatly manifested in their battle tactics. If we assume that they will follow what we consider to my norm, we may suffer very gravely. In truth, I have seen this young Sigiled King of the Pale with my own eyes before."

Minister of Winter: "What?!"

The Lone Winter King: "How..."

The Female Paladin: "His strength is unparalleled. I cannot compare to him at all."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "That can't be..."

The Female Paladin: "However, this will not be a battle which can be won by one man alone. Especially... if the Hero is around. It is too early to throw away all hope. We haven't even contacted them yet. But we also should not be confident of a victory. Make no mistake, this is a gamble which will not be in our favour."

Minister of Winter: "..."

The Lone Winter King: "We will need as much support as we can possibly get."



War of Attrition: This is a war in which the two sides enter into a very long conflict, continuously expending their soldiers and hence suffering constant losses; losses tend to be heavy on both sides and therefore it becomes a war both seek to avoid.

Scorched Earth: This is a tactic of drawing the enemy further into your own country, destroying and obliterating infrastructure and logistics which can be of use to the enemy. This is exceptionally potent in countries with large spaces of empty land and which can afford to suffer to inevitable economic and human damage to the country.

Zealot: These are fighters who are willing to do battle based on their own personal ideals, separate from the other conventional forces, and willing to operate without promise of payment. Especially when doing wars with other countries, they may be willing to participate as reinforcements based on their idea of justice. Furthermore, countries which are unable to participate in the war for political reason may send their own soldiers under the guise of zealots.

The Iron Fist King: “We have to hurry up the production of weaponry and the formation of a central logistics command, along with gathering the reinforcements.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “I will consider how my Kingdom can be of use.”

The Female Paladin: “Let me take care of the battlefield. Umm... My Kings... I am a mere Paladin, but—”

The Lone Winter King: “Whatever you have to say, I'm sure you can say it in the capacity of the invincible general who commands my entire army!”

The Iron Fist King: “That's right. And you're also an extremely beautiful and noble Paladin.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Indeed."

The Female Paladin: "If possible—Even at this time, I would like you to make informed decisions with unclouded hearts."

Minister of Winter: "...?"

The Iron Fist King: "What do you mean?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "What are you talking about?"

The Female Paladin: "—I will head to the battlefield. It is imperative that I must grasp the terrain and battlefield without delay. As this is the land of the Kingdom of Metal, we can still likely get there before the Army of the Pale from the Kingdom of White Night, but who knows how fast they move?"

The Lone Winter King: "Hmm. I'll leave it up to you then, Grand Commander."

The Female Paladin: "Thank you."

——— The Holy Empire, the Southern Plains

Crown Prince Marshal: "Children who have gathered to bathe in the holy light of the greatest the Holy Spirit of Light, chosen warriors of the faith! The time has come for us to make our journey! We have spent a long time on this earth, receiving the guidance of the Spirit and living of the fruit of the lands which the Spirit has so kindly provided. We are the Children of the Spirit, the people chosen by the Light. But in the South, where the short days have sunk them into darkness, the Demon World has come. Here, the barbarity and perverseness of the Demon Race has taken root among the people."

"We must protect our land, and so we must take up the shield and the spear and respond in force to this aggressive threat. First on the list are the Kingdoms of the South. Somehow, the Kingdoms of the South have forgotten just how much they have owed to the protection and patronage of the Continent. These Kings and their armies have already become the hands of Darkness."

"Why is that! The secret of the Holy Relic! The sacred remains of our saviour, the

Spirit of Light. A treasure without equal! A long time ago in the distant past, the Demons took the Holy Relic from our defenceless people and hid it deep in the Demon World! The Kingdoms of the South, entranced and bewitched, have chosen to backstab and betray the charity of the Holy Spirit."

"Look at the lands of the South! Here the people feast on heretical foods, dancing to evil, debauched music. This is all part of the despicable schemes of the Demons, carrying on the demented works of their evil predecessors from long ago!"

"Faithful believers of the Light in the Central Continent! Whether you be high or low, rich or poor, let us advance and rescue our comrades in the South! They are fugitives in the Darkness. Having been fed nonsense about freedom, they must be saved from their backward ways and must return to the proper order of the World! We, the brave champions of the Light, must go now to rescue them from their ways! Army of the Faithful, come with me now! Come for victory, for justice!"

"The Spirit gives us guidance! Those who fall in battle for justice will be saved! Even though people in this world may live wretched and poor lives, true friends of the Spirit will find themselves in a rich world of happiness. Here is where the true treasure of the Spirit, the Holy Relic, resides. If we can have the City of the Gate as well as the Holy Chain in our hands, then we must seize back the Holy Relic. This time will not come again. With the blessings of the Spirit, we march!"

Roar of cheers.

Soldier of Light: "It is as the Spirit wills it!"

Soldier of Light: "It is as the Spirit wills it!"

Soldier of Light: "It is as the Spirit wills it!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Under the banner of the Spirit! With me to the South!"

Roar of cheers.

Bishop: "What an impressive number of people. His Highness is an incredible orator!"

Holy Imperial General: "There are 20,000 men assembled on this field. Ten companies. Four other divisions of similar size are presently being mustered."

Bishop: "Ten thousand. What a brilliant force..."

Holy Imperial General: "The Marshal's grand plan is to use these as the heart for the establishment of a grand army set to invade the Demon World."

Bishop: "Hahahahaha. We shall obliterate them."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Father."

Bishop: "Your Majesty, it was a brilliant speech."

Crown Prince Marshal: "This army was originally formed to serve the Church."

Bishop: "Hahaha. His Holiness the Primarch is also incredibly pleased with this."

Crown Prince Marshal: "And about the announcement?"

Bishop: "Yes. I have made the proclamation exactly as His Holiness has instructed me to. 'The Holy Crusaders march to enact the will of the Spirit, to take back what is rightfully ours. All are welcome to partake in this Holy Expedition and all lords and noblemen will be absolved of any debts and loans they owe.'"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Haha. With this, there will surely be many noblemen willing to throw themselves into a Third Holy Crusade. With a movement like this, surely all the starving serfs and colonists will be joining the Crusaders..."

Holy Imperial General: "400,000 is a truly ridiculous number."

Bishop: "This is thanks to the guidance of the Spirit. It is a true blessing. Hahaha."

Crown Prince Marshal: "This announcement basically states that people with debts should just join the Church, but can you imagine how many noblemen will do it?"

Bishop: "Hahaha! There is nothing for it. The copper will just have to shine

through."

Crown Prince Marshal: "If we can get the Demon World in our hands, this land... this richness... will pay for this many times over. How rich these new lands shall be."

Bishop: "Our Church will be forever grateful for the manner in which you have managed to increase our standing and restore to us the Holy Relic, Your Highness."

Crown Prince Marshal: "I am but a faithful servant of the Spirit."

Bishop: "Yes, I believe we can all see that."

Crown Prince Marshal: "That is why I will be doing my best to make sure this succeeds."

Bishop: "Of course! Of course! Ahahahahahaha!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "And His Holiness?"

Bishop: "His Holiness will soon depart from the Imperial City."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Please ensure that his security is up to scratch."

Bishop: "The Holy Chevaliers of the Church are unrivalled, please rest easy. That being said, the evildoers in the South—"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Do not worry. Leave them to me."

Chapter 7, “You Are Not bandits.”

——— The Kingdom of White Night, the Palace of White Night

Strategist: “Haha. I congratulate you on this splendid victory.”

General of the Pale: “This is all thanks to the excellence of your intelligence. Please convey my thanks to the Crown Prince Marshal on behalf of the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale.”

Strategist: “Understood... And the Sigiled King? I hear he has deposed the old one and achieved many great feats while commanding the Tribe of the Pale?”

General of the Pale: “His Majesty is resting in order to recuperate his strength.”

Strategist: “I see...”

General of the Pale: “His Majesty is also extremely grateful for the assistance of the Holy Empire. This is how things should be in the beginning, should it not? We are the Race of Demons, we bring the White Night.”

Strategist: “I suppose so, hahaha.”

General of the Pale: “We are now fully in control and have no intention of relinquishing this.”

Strategist: “Thank you very much for that.”

General of the Pale: “And now to business.”

Strategist: “Yes.”

General of the Pale: “Firstly, we would like to know what we can hope to receive in compensation for taking down the Kingdom of White Night.”

Strategist: “The Tribe of the Pale now has new lands in the Surface World... Is that not enough?”

General of the Pale: “Did we not win that by our sheer strength? The Holy

Empire invested nothing into that. That is a very poor transaction."

Strategist: "I understand what you are saying... In that case, perhaps I might be able to add something to that thing we agreed on before."

General of the Pale: "Yes. Just as you requested, we have brought along most of the product in our country. In order to move that many goods, my soldiers had to carry them man-to-man and as a result we are significantly lacking in food and weaponry."

Strategist: "Then what do you think if I buy these goods from you at a high price? Would you consider that a transaction?"

General of the Pale: "I would be very happy for that."

Strategist: "How much of the product do you have?"

General of the Pale: "Hmm."

Strategist: "Approximately how much did you bring with you?"

General of the Pale: "I have 900 caravans worth."

Strategist: "I see... In that case, I will buy that with three times the amount of food and enough weaponry for 4,000 men. What do you think?"

General of the Pale: "Saltpetre is a fairly valuable material. I believe five times the amount of food and the same amount of weaponry would be a fair agreement."

Strategist: "...I understand."

General of the Pale: "I will hand over half the saltpetre. We will give you the rest at least before the neighbouring countries have fallen."

Strategist: "...Very good."

General of the Pale: "When can you send over the food?"

Strategist: "Let me think... Since we're only doing half the transaction first, I

suppose it shouldn't take long."

General of the Pale: "In that case, I will arrange for someone to send the goods over. We are now about to reach our intelligence gathering units for the wars with the neighbouring countries."

Strategist: "As to be expected from the ferocious Tribe of the Pale."

Intelligence Officer: "Report!"

General of the Pale: "Go ahead."

Intelligence Officer: "The Survey Corps have been equipped. We are now ready to deploy!"

General of the Pale: "We must be in time for the end of His Majesty's meditation."

Intelligence Officer: "Yes!"

Strategist: "The Kingdom of Metal, then?"

General of the Pale: "Just something for us to grind our teeth on."

Strategist: "Out of the three Kingdoms of the South, they are the one with the most sufficient army. I suppose you will be expecting some resistance, though you are very reassured about that."

General of the Pale: "Indeed... Eh?"

Strategist: "What is it?"

General of the Pale: "No, nothing."

— — — — The Plains of Scilla, the Hinterland of the Kingdom of Metal

Wind blows through the grass...

The Female Paladin: "A very well-prepared formation."

Minister of Winter: "So it would seem. Even though 3,500 is a fairly large number..."

The Female Paladin: "I suppose our army will increase?"

Minister of Winter: "Indeed. I see we have a very astute commander."

Disciple Soldier: "Paladin!"

The Female Paladin: "Disciple Soldier!"

Disciple Soldier: "Hahahahahaha! It has been a long time! I'd thought I'd never see you again! But then again, I knew I would someday!"



Survey Corps: These are soldiers who are trained to survey the land and its forms and to make maps outlining the terrain and the ways it can be advantageous. It is extremely foolish to get into a battle on a battlefield you know nothing about. For this reason, if battles are to be fought on unknown territory, survey corps are sent to survey the terrain. In reverse, by annihilating the survey corps, the enemy can delay the advance of the army or force them to fight in unfamiliar situations, making them vulnerable to threats. The Army of the Pale places much emphasis on the manoeuvrability and speed of its survey corps and hence the entire unit is mounted.

Metal Lieutenant: "Don't tell me, this is?!"

Disciple Soldier: "That is correct! Before you stands one of the three brave Companions of the Hero, the Grandmaster of the Holy Order of the Lake, and the Grand Commander of the Combined Armed Forces of the Tripartite Union!"

They have called her the Paladin of Destruction! The Queen of Power! The Unbreakable Wall! My teacher, my mentor, the Female Paladin!"

The Female Paladin: "You haven't grown a bit."

Minister of Winter: "Hahahahaha."

Metal Lieutenant: "Hahahahaha."

The Female Paladin: "That was embarrassing. But I'm the Female Paladin. I will be taking up the position as the Commander for this battle. Your unit, the Border Security Division, will come under my command."

Metal Lieutenant: "Understood! Please come into the pavilion!"

Disciple Soldier: "Heh... And I thought I would be the commander."

— — — — **The Plains of Scilla, the Barracks of the Kingdom of Metal**

The Female Paladin: "So, I've read that you've fought here before?"

Disciple Soldier: "I have. Bring the map."

Metal Lieutenant: "Yes."

Lays out map.

The Female Paladin: "Hmm."

Disciple Soldier: "This is close to the source of the River of Purple Tears which flows through the Kingdom of Metal and the Kingdom of Ice. The spring water from the thawing snow in the mountains flows through countless rivers, streams, and small rivulets resulting in the inundation of the Plains of Scilla, which is practically a swampland."

Minister of Winter: "Hmm."

Disciple Soldier: "It is full of water so it could potentially be a very rich land with easy access to irrigation but at present it's a terrible place for crops, swamps,

and peat bogs. However, close by is a large area which we can use for our army. Furthermore, this could be a gathering point for any army intending to pass from the Kingdom of White Night to the Kingdom of Metal. They would have to pass through various mountain passes and rough terrain but they could be here in two days, hence I have put stronger forms of surveillance in place."

The Female Paladin: "And how are the sentries done?"

Disciple Soldier: "Each sentry unit is activated for half-a-day rotations, sentry is done as per normal."

The Female Paladin: "Hmm, I'll pass you first."

Disciple Soldier gulps.

Metal Lieutenant: "Sir, you're looking pale."

Disciple Soldier: "The days I spent with the Female Paladin were fruitful but stressful, I can't stop the cold sweat."

The Female Paladin: "Right then, now comes the real thing."

Disciple Soldier nods.

The Female Paladin: "We have 2,000 men at present. 500 cavalrymen and 1,500 infantrymen. They are by any counts proper soldiers with good training and decent battlefield experience."

Disciple Soldier: "This formation and the nearby areas can give us 3,500 soldiers. All of them are proper soldiers who are fairly well-trained and have been under my command for some time now."

Metal Lieutenant: "So in total, we have 5,500 men. We will have to recalculate how much provisions and salaries we will require."

The Female Paladin: "The enemy is at largest 2500 strong. We do not know their strength, their equipment, nor their tactics but we are certain that they have both cavalry and archers. The cavalry are equipped with spears and the rest are generally comprised of infantry men with shields and shortswords."

Disciple Soldier: "And the archers are longbowmen?"

The Female Paladin: "We do not have information about that. But they are fairly effective."

Disciple Soldier: "Hmm. Then we don't know what we're up against."

The Female Paladin: "Indeed."

Disciple Soldier: "Based on our reports, the cavalry are equipped with gold-plated armour."

The Female Paladin: "Heavy cavalry..."

Disciple Soldier: "The first thing we can say is that—"

The Female Paladin: "Let's hear it."

Disciple Soldier: "The enemy commander is no fool, and he is not a hesitant but a patient leader. It is clear that this Tribe of the Pale is very well-equipped, well-disciplined, and splendidly trained soldiers."

The Female Paladin: "I feel the same way."

Disciple Soldier: "Added to the fact that they have four times our number, if we were to engage them in a conventional war, our fate would almost surely be complete defeat."



Peat Bog: This refers to soil rich in peat. This tends to form in marshes and wetlands and since peat succumbs easily to pressure and caves in often, it is not a good terrain for marching through as horses may easily sink and get stuck in it.

The Female Paladin: "Indeed."

Disciple Soldier: "And so we have to use some kind of strategy, but the first thing we need to do is to figure out what our final objective is. Without knowing our objective, we will not be able to construct a reliable strategy."

The Female Paladin: "A good observation."

Disciple Soldier: "I put all my attention into studying the arts of war."

The Female Paladin: "So, you're the Minister for Defence, right? What do you think our objective should be?"

Disciple Soldier: "To protect the people."

The Female Paladin: "Which people?"

Disciple Soldier: "Of course, this includes the Kingdom of White Night."

The Female Paladin: "Then we only have one objective. We will destroy the Tribe of the Pale and liberate the Kingdom of White Night."

Minister of Winter: "Wait just a moment. At present, we don't even know if we will be able to survive, if the Kingdom will not be destroyed, and you want to talk about liberating the Kingdom of White Night?!"

Metal Lieutenant: "That's right! Why should we care about those traitors in the Kingdom of White Night anyway!"

The Female Paladin: "What do you have to say to that?"

Disciple Soldier: "No matter what, even though our battle objectives may change, we should always set our final objectives for the entirety of the campaign, right? If we try for the ultimate objective, we'll be able to set our intermediate goals as well."

Metal Lieutenant: "..."

The Female Paladin: "Right, so let's get to the question at hand."

Disciple Soldier: "Indeed. First, let us hide the difference in our numbers."

The Female Paladin: "Ho, so you're doing that?"

Disciple Soldier: "This was done in ancient times as well. It is a feature of just and noble governance to acquire the lessons of the past. Isn't that something you taught me?"

The Female Paladin: "We have refused soldiers from the Kingdom of Ice, and the 3,000 infantrymen from the Kingdom of Winter will only arrive in a week's time."

Minister of Winter: "Yes, they are already moving as fast as they can."

Disciple Soldier: "I will go and call on the Settler Militia."

The Female Paladin: "What use are they?"

Disciple Soldier: "We have had good results from using them as combat engineers."

The Female Paladin: "Terrain then."

Disciple Soldier: "Terrain indeed."

The Female Paladin: "But like you said before, the enemy are no fools, right? Would a general commanding a force of heavy cavalry really choose a marshland as a battleground? It would be understandable if he has no knowledge of the terrain ahead but it would be strange if he did not send scouts or observers to the battleground."

Disciple Soldier: "We will have to bait him then."

The Female Paladin: "Bait, huh."

Disciple Soldier: "Madam."

The Female Paladin: "What's with the change of mood, this is weird."

Disciple Soldier: "I've been thinking about this for a very, very long time, but you truly have the most perfect and exquisite features. From your eyes which shine

like radiant crystals to your rose-coloured lips to your rich, sleek hair. You are truly a goddess, capable of commanding the attention of everybody who looks upon you.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Uhh.”

Minister of Winter: “What a thing to say to the Grand Commander.”

The Female Paladin: “Wh-what are you saying?!”

Disciple Soldier: “No, no, I am not trying to flatter you. On top of that, you are the most capable commander ever to grace the Tripartite Union of the Southern Kingdoms; truly the Female General of legend.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Uhh—”

Disciple Soldier: (*Softly*) “I'm praising her.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Eh?”

Disciple Soldier: (*Softly*) “I'm praising her intently. I want you to join me.”

The Female Paladin: “What are you doing?”

Disciple Soldier: “I have dreamt of the days under which I fight beneath your banner.”

Metal Lieutenant: “Yes! Every soldier in the Three Kingdoms yearns for nothing less than the opportunity to fight with you.”

Minister of Winter: “That's the truth, I now know this is the same in the Kingdom of Winter.”

The Female Paladin: “What the hell is this about?”

Disciple Soldier: “Please, there is no need to be humble. This is truly the consensus of our army, is it not? Come! Everyone together!”

Metal Lieutenant and Minister of Winter nod.

Disciple Soldier: "Everybody! Long live the Female Paladin!"

Metal Lieutenant and Minister of Winter: "Long live the Female Paladin!"

The Female Paladin: "Hey, you guys, stop!"

Disciple Soldier: "Everybody! Long live the most brilliant and radiant Female Paladin!"

Metal Lieutenant and Minister of Winter: "Long live the Female Paladin!"

The Female Paladin: "Alright, stop! I've had enough of this nonsense!" *Slaps head.*

Disciple Soldier: "Oww. And that's how you bait someone."

The Female Paladin: "Eh?"

Disciple Soldier: "The most delicious bait that is bound to make these Demons of the Pale drool all over themselves is you!"

————— Continental Highway, a Pasture for Sheep

Rumble, rumble.

Shepherd Boy: "Hey, what's that?"

Shepherd Girl: "The whole ground is shaking? ...Eh? What's that?"

Shepherd Boy: "People. Lots of people!"

Shepherd Girl: "What is going on?!"

Rumble, rumble.

— All is as the Spirit wills it — All is as the Spirit wills it

Shepherd Boy: "What a lot of people. Ah, it's an army."

Shepherd Girl: "But with this many soldiers, it can't be a normal lord's army. No, it can't even be a normal king's army..."

Travelling Merchant: "What, haven't you guys heard?"

Shepherd Boy: "Oh, you're the Travelling Merchant."

Shepherd Girl: "What's this? What's happening?"

Travelling Merchant: "His Holiness the Primarch has mustered the Third Holy Crusade."

Shepherd Boy: "Holy..."

Shepherd Girl: "Crusade?"

Travelling Merchant: "Yeah, that's right."

— *All is as the Spirit wills it* — *All is as the Spirit wills it*

Travelling Merchant: "His Holiness the Primarch has called for a massive army in order to destroy those Demons who dare to humiliate and defile our Holy Spirit of Light."

Shepherd Boy: "They can't all be nobles?"

Travelling Merchant: "No, there are even serfs among them."

Shepherd Boy: "To that extent..."

Marching.

Shepherd Girl: "How amazing. It's almost as if the world is about to end..."

Travelling Merchant: "I came from the Northwest and the same thing is going on there. It's lasted for days on end. There're a lot of people everywhere."

Shepherd Boy: "Do you think they would buy mutton?"

Travelling Merchant: "Yeah, I think so? There are a lot of people following them, even prostitutes and beggars, all trying to profit from their needs."

Shepherd Boy: "I think I'll follow them for a while."

Shepherd Girl: "Isn't it kind of scary? You shouldn't go."

Travelling Merchant: "I have no interest in this sort of thing as well."

Shepherd Boy: "But we could make something. I'm going to go."

Shepherd Girl: "Hey, wait for me, I'm coming too!"

----- **The Plains of Scilla, behind a Ridge**

Soft treading...

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "How is it?"

Archer Calvary: "This entire area seems to correspond to it."

Scout of the Pale: "What a large plain."

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "Yes, on the map it seems to be 15km in length."

Archer Calvary: "So, what should we look at?"

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "First, scout out this ridge."

Scout of the Pale: "Understood."

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "Be quick about it. Draw up measurements for how many rows of soldiers can advance comfortably on these plains."

Scout of the Pale: "Understood."

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "How is the terrain?"

Archer Calvary: "Most of it is grassy plains but there are many wet areas and some parts of it look to be slippery peat bogs."

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "Hmm."

Archer Calvary: "What do you think?"

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "How would cavalry perform?"

Archer Calvary: "Light cavalry should have no issues but it may be difficult for the heavy cavalry. If a horse were to lose its footing, it might not be able to get up again. However, it may be possible to avoid the marshlands and navigate through the grassy areas..."

Scout of the Pale: "But marshlands are disadvantageous even for light infantry."

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "It is much worse than it looks. It seems like the extent of usable terrain is somewhat limited."

Archer Calvary: "What a formidable terrain."

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "Archer Cavalry, please dismount and check the terrain from here to the centre of the plains. Note down as much of the marshlands, flatlands, and hilly terrain as you are able to. Many of these look like plains but are actually wet marshes, these are unsuitable in combat. Measure the centre area very carefully and if you encounter any enemies, avoid direct confrontation and gather as much intelligence on them as possible."

Archer Calvary: "Understood."

Dismounts.

Scout of the Pale: "Yes?"

Reconnaissance Leader of the Pale: "So these are scilla flowers. — Hmph, the invincible Tribe of the Pale shall easily crush these Humans just as we crush these weak plants under our boots."

————— The Southern Border, in a Deeply Forested Wood

Hoot, hoot, hoot.

Resourceful Young Man flinches.

Little Sister Maid: "It's just Mr. Owl."

Resourceful Young Man: "I know that!"

Caw, caw, caw, wings flapping.

Resourceful Young Man: "?!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Come now, young man. Why are you so panicky about everything? You're scaring the birds with your nervousness."

Little Sister Maid: "You're slow."

Resourceful Young Man: "That's because I'm carrying all of your luggage!"

Disciple Nobleman: "What of it?"

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Disciple Nobleman: "I'm a nobleman, after all."

Little Sister Maid: "I'm a girl."

Resourceful Young Man: "So I have to carry your luggage?!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Didn't I save your life?"

Little Sister Maid: "Yep, yep."

Resourceful Young Man: "So now I'm your slave!"

Disciple Nobleman: "With that impertinence, I'm inclined to take this rapier and slice your neck into some delicious food."

Little Sister Maid: "I wonder how that would taste like!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Probably terrible. Maybe I should poke you another arsehole?"

Little Sister Maid: "That sounds good♪"

Resourceful Young Man: "Alright, fine, fine, I'll carry it."

Disciple Nobleman: "Hey, hey, you're carrying everything."

Little Sister Maid: "You can't walk in front."

Resourceful Young Man: "Then how am I supposed to know where the place is?!"

Disciple Nobleman: "But you know this place really well."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah."

Resourceful Young Man: "There's an abandoned ruins up ahead... There should be people there."

Disciple Nobleman: "Ahh, here we are."

Little Sister Maid: "This is... the smell of bean soup."

Resourceful Young Man: "Is that good?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Yeah, that's our destination."

Resourceful Young Man: "Then this is enough for me, right? Those guys are bad. I don't want to go there."

Disciple Nobleman: "Ahahahaha. Didn't you say you weren't a porter?"

Resourceful Young Man: "Come on! I've been carrying the load of two people!"

Little Sister Maid: "?"

Disciple Nobleman: "?"

Resourceful Young Man: "Don't pretend that you don't know what I'm talking about!"

Disciple Nobleman: "What an interesting young man."

Little Sister Maid: "Very spritely."

Resourceful Young Man: "Hey, please! That place is filled with dastardly mercenaries. They're worse than bandits! They're professionals used to a life of slaughter and murder!"

Disciple Nobleman: "That's why we've come all this way."

Resourceful Young Man: "I don't get it!"



Rapier: A very thin sword. With the invention of firearms, armour became obsolete from the 16th century onwards so smaller swords could be used just as effectively. It was not a sword you carried whilst facing a fully-armoured enemy.

Disciple Nobleman: "I understand. They're pros so I'm sure they'd have noticed trespassers like ourselves at this distance."

Arrow notched.

Muscular Mercenary: "Don't move. Drop your weapons."

Disciple Nobleman: "You didn't really think they wouldn't have noticed, right?"

----- **The Border of the Kingdom of Winter, a Ruined Fortress in the Woods**

Mercenary Leader: "Right, who the hell are you?"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "If you don't answer, you're not going to go back home."

Resourceful Young Man: "I'm not related to that brat and that strange man over there. Please forgive me, oh honourable leader."

Disciple Nobleman: "What are you saying, you terrible loser?"

Little Sister Maid: "My sister would laugh at you."

Mercenary Leader: "So you are the Disciple Nobleman?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Disciple Nobleman is my name. I am a believer of exquisite waltzes, the fragrance of flowers, the sweetness of wine, and the love of beautiful ladies."

Little Sister Maid: "I am the Little Sister Maid, the future Royal Head Chef."

Mercenary Leader: "Hmph. And what are you doing here?"

Disciple Nobleman: "I heard that there were some strong mercenary stragglers hiding out here in the forests so I came to investigate."

Mercenary Leader: "Oho..."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Chief." *Raises spear.*

Disciple Nobleman: "Please put that weapon down. I'm not proud of it, but I'm a weak guy. You might just make me wet my very gorgeous pants."

Little Sister Maid: "That's not very cool..."

Mercenary Leader: "Really now? I've lived on the battlefield for a long time. Didn't you pick up a thing or two from that terrible woman? I've seen what she can do."

Disciple Nobleman: "Just a few random swings in the backyard. I'm not good enough to ever hope to use it well. That being said, there are hundreds of scary people like yourselves in this fortress and I couldn't possibly escape from you all. From that tower..."

Resourceful Young Man: "Eh?"

Disciple Nobleman: "...there must be quite a few crossbows pointing straight at us, right?"

Mercenary Leader: "It is as you say. Hehehe... Then, what are you here for? Are you here to give us money too? Which one is it?"

Disciple Nobleman: "..."

Resourceful Young Man: "Which one?"

Mercenary Leader: "Do you want us to 'seize everything from the Kingdom of Winter' or 'forgive the Kingdom of Winter for everything'? We're mercenaries, so you're here to offer us money?"

Disciple Nobleman: "I see, is that what you think I came here for?"

Mercenary Leader: "...Is there something else?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Let me consider if there is anything else."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "You cheeky fool!"

Resourceful Young Man: "Ahhh!"

Mercenary Leader: "What are you trying to say?"

Disciple Nobleman: "I was just thinking you have a very well-kept warhorse."

Mercenary Leader: "..."

Disciple Nobleman: "It's not just about feeding it good grass. If you don't wipe it every day, you'll never get that lustrous shine on its coat. That goes the same for all your other equipment; even though they're just weapons, you really take care of them very well, like you love them, don't you? You've got a good system for running this fortress so you're clearly not bandits."

Mercenary Leader: "What are you trying to say?"

Disciple Nobleman: "To be honest, I'm here to hire you."

Mercenary Leader: "There you go, it's obvious you came for that."

Disciple Nobleman: "No, no, the meaning of this and my objectives for it are completely different."

Mercenary Leader: "Exactly what are you trying to say?"

Disciple Nobleman: "I'm sure you know about the Kingdom of White Night, it's not very far from here."

Mercenary Leader: "Yeah."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Hmph, those guys."

Disciple Nobleman: "Their capital has been seized by the Demons."

Mercenary Leader: "...Ha. Those pathetic nobles. They couldn't even do the bare minimum of protecting their own country. What a joke."

Disciple Nobleman: "Right, I want you to rescue their capital."

Resourceful Young Man: "What?"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Huh?! What the hell are you talking about?!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Is that a strange request?"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Of course! Why are you bringing us into this fight with the Demons?! And this is something for pathetic noblemen to be doing!"

Mercenary Leader: "—Hey, shut up. Right, Disciple Nobleman. While you're still alive, is that all you want to say?"

Disciple Nobleman: "I'm not trying to cover up for their mistakes. The Kingdom of White Night has been exterminated. Their King is dead and their government has been destroyed. That place is merely a patch of land known as the White Night. There isn't even anyone to cover up for. That's not important."

Resourceful Young Man: "...That's my country."

Disciple Nobleman: "What remains is a patch of land with large numbers of starving and tortured people, civilians who have become serfs and slaves. — That's all."

Little Sister Maid: "Yeah..."

Mercenary Leader: "And?"

Disciple Nobleman: "So what these people need is a hero!"

Mercenary Leader: "?"

Disciple Nobleman: "So, what do you think? Do you think you could become a People's Liberation Army?" (*TL Note: Sorry, couldn't resist, hehe.*)

Mercenary Leader: "Are you serious?!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Yes. I'm completely serious. To begin with, I come from an institution where they taught us to be completely serious even when our surroundings have degenerated into complete insanity. These are troublesome times. The Disciple Soldier, the Elder Sister Maid, even the Female Paladin, we are all very serious about this. The people need a miracle. — This is a completely serious matter. It is very grave."

Mercenary Leader: "...What the hell."

Disciple Nobleman: "I'm sure you know, but those Demons are now attacking the neighbouring Kingdom of Metal. I don't know how many are under their command but my sworn brother the Disciple Soldier heads the army that is moving to stop them."

"What this means is that the Kingdom of White Night is probably devoid of military strength. I know you can muster up a small army to attack them, right? These soldiers should be strong enough to take the city, at least for a while. That will buy a window of time for the surviving citizens to escape... I heard what you did at the border of the Kingdom of the Kingfisher."

Mercenary Leader: "You, where did you hear that..."

Disciple Nobleman: "The diplomatic circle is much bigger than you think."

Mercenary Leader: "..."

Disciple Nobleman: "And that's why you wouldn't abandon the citizens of the Kingdom of White Night. I come to you with this on my mind. I know that even if the wind of cowardice blows over you, you will still do this noble task."

Mercenary Leader: "What is my reward?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Hey, young man."

Resourceful Young Man: "What is it?"

Disciple Nobleman: "Empty the luggage."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "What? You came bringing gold? Did you want to get robbed, you fool?"

Resourceful Young Man: "Got it, I'll empty it."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Shall I open it, Chief? ...What's this?"

Resourceful Young Man: "What is this..."

Little Sister Maid: "Bacon, potatoes, and white cream pie."

Mercenary Leader: "What..."

Disciple Nobleman: "Eat up."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "What did you say?!"

Disciple Nobleman: "Shut up and eat the hell up! If you don't, it's going to get cold. Hurry up and eat!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Chief... It smells great, but it could be poisoned."

Little Sister Maid: "No way! I made them myself!"

Mercenary Leader: "Give me one."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: “But—”

Mercenary Leader: “Hurry up... Mmm.”

Mercenary Spear Horseman: “Fine, then me too.”

Mercenary Archer: “Me too.”

Mercenary Swordsman: “I'm starving.”

Mercenary Leader: “...Delicious.”

Little Sister Maid: “Thank you! I tried really hard!”

Mercenary Leader: “Ahh, delicious. How wonderful. You made this? Amazing. It's great. Even though you're so small. Ahh, what's this. I seem to have wronged you—Yumm.”

Disciple Nobleman: “So, what do you think?”

Resourceful Young Man: “Why are you so proud of yourself?”

Disciple Nobleman: “If you save the Kingdom of White Night, there will be a lot more where that came from.”

Mercenary Leader: “Huh?”

Resourceful Young Man: “You will get to eat this forever.”

Mercenary Leader: “What do you mean?”

Resourceful Young Man: “The leader of the People's Liberation Army is an official, right? Whether it is in the Kingdom of Winter or in the reborn Kingdom of White Night. Having saved these people from hell on earth, you will be their hero. The people will thank you. But how do you think they will do it? If you just wanted to be bandits then why do you continue to take care of your horses so well? Why do you sharpen your weapons? You are not bandits. You are mercenaries. You are a proud mercenary group who dreams of striding back into your hometown one day.”

Mercenary Leader: "Really? But we fought against that Female Paladin of yours before as well."

Disciple Nobleman: "I will carry this responsibility. As the envoy of Her Majesty the Queen of Ice and Snow and as Ambassador for the Tripartite Economic Union, I plead of you. The Kingdom of Ice will bear the cost of this. Please prepare your units, arm your men, and go into hiding along the borders of the Kingdom of White Night. When you see an opportunity, you are to free the people. I am not asking you to repulse the Demons. All I want is for you to save the people to the best of your abilities."

Little Sister Maid: "Please."

Mercenary Leader: "..."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Chief..."

Mercenary Archer: "Chief..."

Disciple Nobleman: "..."

Mercenary Leader: "Could I have another one?"

Little Sister Maid: "This has a really fatty piece of pork in it. It tastes loads better when it's hot."

Mercenary Leader: "Heh. Delicious. Splendid. How splendid. Ha. — Alright!"

Disciple Nobleman smiles.

Mercenary Leader: "I accept your delicious advance payment! Alright, men! We've got a new contract! Our war is about to begin. It is the destiny of every mercenary to die gloriously in combat. So before we die, let's earn that final bit of gratitude we never got to receive!"

——— The Plains of Scilla, the Frontline

Scout: "Here they come!"

The Female Paladin: "What is their composition?"

Scout: "Infantry in the centre. We can respond with light infantry, but they seem to be armed with very large wooden shields."

Minister of Winter: "An anti-arrow measure."

Scout: "Moreover, their flanks are supplemented by light cavalry and heavy cavalry. It is a deep formation. The protruding section alone seems to be ten thousand strong."

Light Cavalry of Winter: "Ten... thousand..."

The Female Paladin: "Don't be scared! I don't care if the enemy has two thousand soldiers, we have seven thousand! All that needs to happen is for each of us to kill three of them!"

Light Cavalry of Winter: "Yes!"

The Female Paladin: "What is the distance?"

Scout: "They are still at the bottom of the ridge. We should contact them at noon."

Minister of Winter: "Commander..."

The Female Paladin: "If you see the enemy commander, that Sigiled King of the Pale, I want all of you to retreat. Throw down your weapons and get the hell out."

Minister of Winter: "...Understood."

— — — — The Plains of Scilla, the Army of the Pale

General of the Pale: "The formation is complete. This will be the rear guard."

Officer of the Pale: "Yes! Square Formation!"

Running.

Soldier of the Pale: "All ready up to 15th company!"

Light Cavalryman of the Pale: "Light cavalry are ready!"

Archer of the Pale: "Archers assembled."

General of the Pale: "And what of the enemy?"

Scout of the Pale: "They have yet to move from their reported locations. Their frontline is established along the centre hill, they are dug in and defensive."

General of the Pale: "That is a good position, an excellent location from which to deploy their cavalry."

Officer of the Pale: "But that is the same for us as well."

General of the Pale: "That's precisely why it is imperative for them to engage us with archers as much as possible, to wear down our numbers before the battle."

Infantry Leader of the Pale: "But things aren't going to go as they expect. We've got massive shields to block their arrows and once we get close enough, their arrows will be all but useless. Things won't go the way they plan."

General of the Pale: "Hmm. That may be so, but we should crush the resistance of these people. This is a war of the Pale. — Come! Call the Command Group!"

Commissar of the Pale: "Reporting!" *Salute.*

General of the Pale: "Relay my orders! Break through the line at the centre of the hill then charge through it with our heavy cavalry!"



Square Formation: A formation in which soldiers form a square. It is a very basic formation and is most often used by infantry. It may not be very different from a lot of other types of formations, but it is one which prizes defensiveness over manoeuvrability.

— — — — **The Plains of Scilla, the Frontline**

Light Cavalry of Winter: “The fog is here.”

Spearman of Winter: “Yeah...”

Archer of Winter: “The Demons draw close! They are in sight!”

The Female Paladin: “Not yet, don't fire yet. Pull!”

Minister of Winter: “All archers ready!”

Arrows notch.

The Female Paladin: “...”

Minister of Winter: “Not yet?”

Spearman of Winter: “They're still out of our effective range but approaching fast.”

Archer of Winter: “They have a lot less of those large shields than we thought. It seems to be some sort of emergency equipment. At this rate, our archers will be very effective.”

The Female Paladin: “...Don't tell me.”

Archer of Winter: “We are in range. Commander, shall we fire!”

The Female Paladin: “...”

Archer of Winter: “They draw closer, please give the command!”

The Female Paladin: “...!!! Fine. Fire!”

Arrows flying.

——— The Plains of Scilla, the Vanguard of the Demons of the Pale

Slave Soldier: "Ahhhhh!"

Commissar of the Pale: "Advance! Advance!"

Slave Soldier: "No way! The arrows are like a wall!"

Commissar of the Pale: "You are losers and stragglers! Slaves!"

Slave Soldier: "We are people. People shouldn't fight people!"

Commissar of the Pale: "Ha! All this while, the Kingdom of Metal and the Kingdom of White Night have been at war, haven't you! Just what are you talking about! Stand up! Stand up and fight!"

Slave Soldier: "No way! I don't want to die!"

Commissar of the Pale: "Then die here!"

Stab.

Slave Soldier: "Ahhhhh?!"

Commissar of the Pale: "Do not forget that the Commiserate marches behind you! Any one of you who even tries to escape will be executed without question!"

Slave Soldier: "Wh-what!"

Commissar of the Pale: "Pick up your spears! Advance! Take that hill!"

——— The Plains of Scilla, in the Forest, an Ambush Spot

Disciple Soldier: "Hide the horses in the reeds. Quietly."

Soldier of Metal: "Yes."

Disciple Soldier: "..."

Clink, clink.

Officer of Metal: "Looks like it has begun."

Soldier of Metal: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "Our responsibility is to stay here. Do not worry, have faith in the Commander."

Officer of Metal: "Yes."

Disciple Soldier: "Just three more hours and we might be able to turn this around. Until then..."

Officer of Metal: "Yeah. The plan of the Minister of Defence will work."

Disciple Soldier: "Hahahaha. This was thought up by the Female Paladin."

Officer of Metal: "But you gave her the inspiration for it!"

Disciple Soldier: "She is my teacher."

Officer of Metal: "I... Ahh, fine. Actually, I've learnt a lot from you, and who I am today is the product of what you have given me."

Disciple Soldier: "You've saved me on many occasions too."

Officer of Metal: "Oh no, I wouldn't say that."

Scout: "General."

Disciple Soldier: "What is it?"

Scout: "An unidentified force is advancing upon our position from behind."

Soldier of Metal: "Behind?! What?"

Scout: "They've come down the roads and into the forests. But they're not Demons, they're Humans."

Soldier of Metal: "Reinforcements? We would sure be happy for all the help we

can get..."

Officer of Metal: "Send an envoy and figure out who they are first."

Disciple Soldier: "Yeah, they could be the combat engineers since they were quite separated from us the last time. In any case, Scout, please confirm who they—"

Bang!

Officer of Metal: "?!"

Soldier of Metal: "Wh-what..."

Bang! Bang!

Disciple Soldier: "What's this..."

Soldier of Metal: "General! General!"

Disciple Soldier: "Calm down!"

Soldier of Metal: "Our rear guard and the settler militia have come into contact with the mysterious army! They are attacking! They're obliterating us with some sort of thunder-producing ranged weapon!"

Disciple Soldier: "What?!"

——— The Kingdom of Metal, the Palace, the Grand Hall

The Hero: "Alright, shall we go?"

The Queen of Fairies: "Any time."

Fairy Maiden: "I'm a bit scared."

The Hero: "Leave it to me. At the very least, I'll make sure you're able to escape. In any case, Humans are the kind of people who like to randomly wave their swords about."

The Queen of Fairies: "Calm yourself. We are on a mission from the Demon King herself. She is expecting our success."

Fairy Maiden: "Yes..."

The Hero: "Alright. Let's go."

Opens doors.

The Hero: "Lone Winter King. Iron Fist King. Queen of Ice and Snow. I apologise for the wait!"

The Iron Fist King: "Oho, Hero. How early."

The Lone Winter King: "Is something the matter?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "It must be cold this early in the morning, right? Come by the hearth."

The Hero: "Umm, ahem. Today I have brought some guests from a very distant part of the war. Allow me to introduce them to you. —"

The Queen of Fairies: "It is a pleasure to meet you."

Fairy Maiden: "A pleasure." *Curtsies.*

The Iron Fist King coughs.

The Lone Winter King: "..."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Eh?"

The Hero: "Umm, on the right... is the Iron Fist King, the King of the Kingdom of Steel. He is the sovereign of the Kingdom and the Palace which we are currently in. You could say that he is currently in command of the war with the Demons of the Pale. In the centre is the Lone Winter King. The King of the Kingdom of Winter. He's the one who got the Three Kingdoms to unite into the Tripartite Economic Union. The lady on the left is the Queen of Ice and Snow. The Kingdom of Ice is a land famous for its poets and bards. It's a small country sandwiched between the Kingdoms of Metal and Winter and has developed a

very splendid culture for it.”

The Queen of Fairies: “I see.”

The Iron Fist King: “Eh?”

The Hero: “Right, and my guest hails from the Demon World and is one of the Eight Great Khans of the Kurultai. She is the Khan of those who live in the woods, who flit in the early dawn and the close of dusk, the Tribe of Fairies, the Queen of Fairies. She is accompanied by her lady-in-waiting the Fairy Maiden.”

The Queen of Fairies: “I apologise for the late greetings. I am the Queen of Fairies.”

Fairy Maiden bows.

The Lone Winter King: “...”

The Hero: “Umm, well, she's a fairly powerful figure in the Demon World, but she's not here in that capacity. She's a special envoy representing the Kurultai, in other words, the highest authority in the Demon World. She does not just convey the intentions of the Kurultai, but also of the Demon King.”

The Iron Fist King: “Hero, is this some kind of joke?”

The Lone Winter King: “It's not a very funny joke.”

The Hero: “No, I'm completely serious.”

The Queen of Fairies: “...”

The Iron Fist King: “Demon...”

The Lone Winter King: “Queen of Fairies. You must have come a very long way. Come and sit by our hearth. It must be cold, come and share in the warmth of the embers.”

The Iron Fist King: “What are you saying, this is a Demon?!”

The Lone Winter King: “That may be so, but she is still a Queen. Even an enemy

sovereign must be treated with the respect that they deserve. Moreover, she's come from an incredibly faraway place. Look. She hasn't brought any guards, just a defenceless handmaiden. It's clear that she's not here for any sort of warlike purpose."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "But..."

The Lone Winter King: "Moreover, the Hero brought her here. I trust him."

The Iron Fist King: "That's true... If the Iron Fist King lets a woman scare him, I would never hear the end of it."

The Queen of Fairies: "Thank you."

Wings fluttering.

The Lone Winter King: "Let's hear it."

The Queen of Fairies: "I have many things to say. Firstly, I represent the Nine, no... Eight Great Tribes, in seeking permission to pass through the Human World... We may live in troubling times, but I have made this trip to the Human World to seek this pledge."

The Iron Fist King: "Are you intending to invade us again?"

The Lone Winter King: "..."

The Hero: "If you start like this, you won't understand what she's trying to say, would you?"

The Lone Winter King: "That being said, why are you accompanying a Demon? Have you crossed over to their side?"

The Hero: "No one ever said that would be a bad thing?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "That is heresy."

The Lone Winter King: "My Queen, please do not forget that we are all heretics."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "...True, but..."

The Hero: "This all began, well... It all began a really, really long time ago, but this thing started with the Demon King needing to recover from her injuries. And then the Kurultai."

The Iron Fist King: "Kurultai?"

The Hero: "Yeah, the Kurultai is a large Conference. The Demon King calls the Khans of the Eight Tribes together and they congregate with large numbers of their people. The Demon World is nominally ruled by the Demon King, but in actual fact, it is factionalised between several large Tribes, which have been fighting for influence and dominance for hundreds of years. However, due to an unprecedented threat, in other words the Human invasion, there has been relative peace between the Demon Tribes for the last 15 years or so."

The Iron Fist King: "Invasion? We were the ones who were invaded."

The Queen of Fairies: "Well actually, it was the Humans who destroyed the seal on the gate and invaded first."

The Lone Winter King: "I see..."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yeah."

The Iron Fist King: "What? What do you mean?"

The Lone Winter King: "No, I had my doubts from the start. Why did the Church dispatch such a massive and well-equipped investigation squad? And why was the investigation squad known as a Crusade?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

The Queen of Fairies: "But that is not what I have come here to talk to you about today. The Demon World is at war with the Human World. Because the Demons did not end it... we have been expending much of our energy killing and attacking each other. The result is, as you know, with the Demons successfully taking the Isle of Light. However, in return, our holy land the City of the Gate was lost."

Wings fluttering.

The Queen of Fairies: “The frontlines appeared to draw into a stalemate, but reality was different. The Humans changed their tactics. There were rumours of an invincible Human warrior known as the Hero. This Hero and his companions roamed the military mustering points and the ancient temples of the Demon World. With formidable weapons and incredible magic, he broke the Demon Armies wherever he went. Because they were so few in number they were impossible to find, and we suffered continuous setbacks at their hands...”

“As these attacks carried on, it became clear that the Humans would eventually triumph over the Demons with his help, and the name of the Hero struck fear and revulsion into everybody... But then, the Hero and the Demon King engaged in a fierce battle, with both being heavily injured, and they disappeared... That is the story that was widespread in the Demon World.”

The Iron Fist King smiles.

The Hero: “—”

The Queen of Fairies: “But the Demon King was not dead. We knew that immediately. This may be difficult to explain to Humans, but the Demon World cannot exist without a Demon King. If the Demon King goes down, another Demon King will be chosen immediately. As long as that does not occur, then the Demon King has not died. However, the present Demon King has received one constant criticism. And that is the fact that she is poor in combat and weak. Of course, the Demon King is a genius in strategy and administration. I myself highly respect the present Demon King, in some ways more than her predecessors but this criticism was levelled against her by many of the Khans, who were disgruntled by it. Over time, the rumours that the Demon King was recovering from her injuries continued the longer she had disappeared.”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “Is that why we had that period of peace?”

The Queen of Fairies: “Yes, it is. And three years passed. In that time, the Isle of Light passed back into Human hands, and the Demons reclaimed the City of the Gate, but on the whole, peace reigned.”

“With the help of the Hero, many destabilising elements in the Demon World were purged. Of course, the wars in the Human World had started as well, but without the command of the Demon King we could not unite to launch any

serious attacks on the Human World. I hope you do not misunderstand when I say that the vast majority of the Demon World still supported invading the Humans."

The Lone Winter King: "Well, and then?"

The Queen of Fairies: "The Demons do not believe in venerating one god like you do in the Human World. Each Tribe has its own teachings and its own cultures. What do you think when you see me? With these wings?"

"I don't look anything like the Demons of the Pale, right? This is just a difference in appearance, but with these, it is difficult to avoid differences in ideology and culture. The Demons live in a world split into different Tribes, each comprised of countless Demons. Of course, each Tribe has its own ideology and often engages in wars with the others."

"To begin with, in those three years, there were very few Demons who were not enraged that the holy site for most of the Demon gods, the City of the Gate, belonged to the Humans. As a result, many Demons harboured ill-intentions towards the Humans. As those three years passed, rumours arose that the Demon King had risen, and the Kurultai was summoned."

The Lone Winter King: (That matches the intelligence we received from Grandpa.)

The Iron Fist King: "Is that so?"

The Queen of Fairies: "Of course, the content of the Conference was how to progress the war with the Humans. At the very least, the majority of Demons considered this heavily on their minds. However, among them there were people like the Tribe of Fairies who sought an end to the war."

"Why should we, a small and fragile Tribe, expose ourselves to the immense dangers of war? We spent a long time advancing our views to the other Eight Tribes together with the Demon King, trying our best to achieve a ceasefire."

The Iron Fist King: "A ceasefire?! Really?!"

The Lone Winter King: "..."

The Queen of Fairies: "However, even though some of us truly wished for peace, powerful elements in the Demon World fought against us. Not only were they enraged and sought revenge, they also sought the new lands and the overflowing riches of the Human World. In the eyes of powerful Demons, the Human World was like a ripe fruit waiting to be picked."

"The Conference went on for a long time. A very, very long time. Roughly a month. With the persuasiveness of the Demon King, the Kurultai slowly progressed towards a consensus for a ceasefire. That is when the Tribe of the Pale hatched their schemes to assassinate the Demon King. As a result of this betrayal, the Eight Great Tribes split into two, setting aside the agenda of the war with the Humans and focusing on the anarchy of the chaotic world in which Demons would fight each other again."

"However, due to the wisdom and courage of a select few individuals, the worst case scenario was avoided. The result was that only the Tribe of the Pale broke away from the Demon World and the circle of Khans and chose independently to oppose the entire Demon World. It is definitely true that the Tribe of the Pale are a battle-hardened martial Tribe but they do not have the strength to break the combined alliance of the Tribe of the Fang, the Tribe of Dragons, and the Tribe of Banshees. We sought to crush the Tribe of the Pale and restore the Kurultai. We thought we had them trapped in their own territory and that with a slow siege we could force them to realise that they could not possibly hope to defeat the entire Demon World on their own."

The Lone Winter King: "And to escape, the Tribe of the Pale attacked the Human World?"

The Queen of Fairies: "That is correct. We soon received news that the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale had invaded the Human World at lightning speed and conquered the Kingdom of White Night."

The Iron Fist King: "So in the end, you brought your misfortune to us."

The Queen of Fairies: "Iron Fist King, your reputation for hardness precedes you. It is as you say, the situation before you is the result of our internal situation and we have brought our harm to the Human World. As a result, the Demon World hopes to be given the opportunity to right this grave wrong."

The Iron Fist King: "Dammit."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "No, that's not right. Putting it another way, this development is the result of the Hero injuring the Demon King and leaving the Demon World in a mess for those few years."

The Iron Fist King: "But that's because the Demons invaded the Human World."

The Lone Winter King: "If you're talking about who did what first, then there's a good chance we started it."

The Queen of Ice and Snow nods.

The Queen of Fairies: "The Eight Great Tribes of the Kurultai—"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Sorry, just a moment. The Tribe of the Demons of the Pale have left the Kurultai, right? So shouldn't there be seven?"

The Hero: "Ah."

The Queen of Fairies: "Yes. I didn't say this earlier because I didn't want to make it more complicated, but as a result of the Demon King's reactions to the schemes of the Demons of the Pale, a new Tribe was added to the Kurultai. The Tribe of the Gate. They are the only Tribe in the Demon World with a Human Khan."

The Iron Fist King: "A Human?!"

The Hero: "I've probably got to explain this segment. Lone Winter King. You do remember that there were approximately 20,000 Holy Crusaders garrisoned in the City of the Gate, right?"

The Lone Winter King: "Yes."

The Hero: "And you remember that they fled with their tails between their legs to the Isle of Light?"

The Lone Winter King: "If they hadn't attacked the Demons from behind, they would have begun a massive counterattack. We would have lost a lot of soldiers and many, many people would have died. Because of them, the value of our

victory did not diminish and they practically saved the day, right? What about them?"

The Hero: "Looks like you only got half the story."

The Lone Winter King: "But I do know that the City of the Gate remained a place with a strong Human presence."

The Hero: "More accurately, it has become a Free City ruled by a Self-Governing Council."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "Is that similar to the Free Cities in the Human World?"

The Hero: "It is the same. Except they have no sovereign and are ruled by a group of representative Councillors. Well, it's true that the bulk of the garrison did flee from the City of the Gate, retreating into the Human World, but most of the citizens stayed. And make no mistake, there were a lot of civilians. Nearly ten thousand merchants, artisans, and shopkeepers stayed behind."

"Having been abandoned by the Crusaders, they chose to adopt amicable relations with the Demons. If they hadn't done that, it is likely that they would all have been slaughtered to the last man. I believe it was a wise decision. As a result, the City of the Gate has become a city in which Demons and Humans live together in harmony. Furthermore, the Self-Governing Council has proclaimed that the entire city is a Tribe."

The Iron Fist King: "A Tribe? Isn't that a group of people who are born in the same area?"

The Hero: "Most of the time, that is so, but there is no law which says that. As long as you all adopt the same name and the same values, no matter who you are, you can start your own Tribe. That's why the remaining Humans in the City of the Gate have joined hands with the Demons who live in the same City of the Gate and declared themselves the Tribe of the Gate."

"And they have been accepted into the Kurultai too. They oppose the war, of course. — It is because of their involvement that the Kurultai is moving towards a ceasefire. Of course, there is still strong suspicion and opposition against

Humans. It is a fact that there is some doubt as to whether or not a ceasefire can ever be properly implemented.”

“However, we have a lot to lose if we get into a war. It's possible that both Worlds will be ravaged and destroyed by the end of it.”

The Iron Fist King: “Ravaged...”

The Lone Winter King: “Mmm.”

The Queen of Fairies: “I come to you today representing the will of the Kurultai, the Eight Great Tribes, and the Demon King. Of course, we know that the Human World is not a monolithic organisation. But in order for the Demon World to be involved in halting the excessive violence of the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale... I would like to outline our intentions. Firstly, I believe you should consider allowing us to deal with them directly. Allowing the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale to progress so far is our responsibility. We hence request for the permission for the Demon Army to march to the Tribe of the Demons of the Pale and engage them. Moreover, we would like to request a ceasefire with the Tripartite Economic Union. To be honest, we would like a ceasefire with the entire Human World, but achieving a ceasefire with just a section of it would be a great step forward as well.”

The Iron Fist King: “...”

The Lone Winter King: “What do you think?”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “Well...”

The Queen of Fairies: “...”

Fairy Maiden: “...”

The Iron Fist King: “And how many soldiers would the Demon Army bring into our lands?”

The Queen of Fairies: “About ten thousand.”

The Iron Fist King: “What evidence do you have to prove that everything you have told us is not a lie, that this is not just a plan for you to reinforce the Army

of the Demons of the Pale and invade the Human World together?"

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "That is a possibility."

The Queen of Fairies: "By the Portal between our Worlds, there are currently one thousand Fairy Maidens waiting for my command."

Fairy Maiden: "Yes..."

The Iron Fist King: "Maidens?"

The Queen of Fairies: "Until the Demon Army has retreated completely from your World, these Maidens, along with myself, will be held in your cities as hostages. Will that be enough?"

The Iron Fist King: "—"

The Lone Winter King: "I can't say for sure whether or not there's some scheme behind this, but with regards to the situation in the Demon World for the last three years and their strengths, I can say for certain that these have been verified by my own intelligence-gathering units."

The Iron Fist King: "Hero."

The Hero: "?"

The Iron Fist King: "Just what is your intention in having us cooperate with the Demons?"

The Hero: "Of course I have intentions and ideas but for now this is mostly a matter of gains and losses."

The Iron Fist King: "..."

The Lone Winter King: "That's true. It's not like the Hero is a subject of the Southern Kingdoms."

The Queen of Ice and Snow nods.

The Hero: "To avoid a misunderstanding, I think there is something I should say."

The Iron Fist King: "Yes?"

The Hero: "I am not the saviour of the Human World. I am the Hero — I save whichever World has people who need saving. If there is a need for me to be there, no matter who is oppressing whom, I will be there to help."

The Iron Fist King: "So you would even be the enemy of the Humans?"

The Hero: "This is not a matter of enemies or allies."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "..."

The Lone Winter King: "..."

The Hero: "Don't look so scared."

The Lone Winter King: "—So these are the crossroads."

The Iron Fist King: "What do you mean, Lone Winter King?"

The Lone Winter King: "If we need it, then you will save us too?"

The Hero: "As much as my strength allows."

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "How exactly are you going to save us?"

The Hero: "Well, if the dialogue between the Queen of Fairies and the Three Kingdoms continues. I believe that what we are doing here, right here right now, is what will save the World."

Chapter 8, “This is order -- The Musket.”

----- The Plains of Scilla, the Frontline

The Female Paladin: “Have no fear! Eyes front! Fire!”

Minister of Winter: “Fire!”

Spearman of Winter: “But!!!”

Archer of Winter: “The enemy is the Kingdom of White Night!”

The Female Paladin: “Do not hesitate! I will take all responsibility! Look! Face front and look! They are soldiers charging up to us with weapons. They are soldiers. They are no slaves. They are not dying from arrows to their backs. If you have pain and regret from hurting them then we will surely die in their hands. Let me shoulder the burden of the shame of murder. — Do not think about anything else. Fire!”

Minister of Winter: “Behind us are 200,000 settlers from the Three Kingdoms! If you take one step back, it is their lives that will be lost!”

Spearman of Winter: “...Ahhh!”

Archer of Winter: “Fire!”

Arrows flying.

The Female Paladin: “Cavalry on the right flank!”

Minister of Winter: “Yes!”

Cavalryman of Winter: “Assembled, milady!”

The Female Paladin: “Move out! Prepare to attack in three waves. Charge!”

----- The Plains of Scilla, the Army of the Pale

General of the Pale: "Hmm, they're not being destroyed."

Officer of the Pale: "The enemy is holding up well."

General of the Pale: "But our losses are mostly slaves. They're just tools for us to use as we wish... Infantry!"

Infantry Leader of the Pale: "Yes!"

General of the Pale: "Back up the Commiserate and those pathetic slaves. Form a line of attack and press on from behind. Use the Humans as shields and construct a bridge head on the central hill!"

Infantry Leader of the Pale: "Yes! Heavy Infantry!"

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

Infantry Leader of the Pale: "Prepare to advance! Helmets on! Form up in three waves of five rows!"

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

General of the Pale: "Light Cavalry!"

Light Cavalryman of the Pale: "Yes!"

General of the Pale: "Support the infantry advance from the right wing! Avoid casualties. Leave the heavy fighting to the infantry. Your goal is to disrupt their rear guard!"

Light Cavalryman of the Pale: "Understood, sir!"

——— The Plains of Scilla, the Frontline

The Female Paladin: "Ugh! Third Archer Company, retreat one hundred paces! Central Spears, support!"

Minister of Winter: "Hurry up with the supplies!"

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

“Witness the power of the Pale!” “For the Sigiled King!”

Spearman of Winter: “Are they trying to scare us!”

Archer of Winter: “For the Female Paladin!”

The Female Paladin: “You will not so easily scare the brave men of the South!”

Minister of Winter: “Stand your ground!”

Spearman of Winter: “Yes!”

Soldiers: “For the Female Paladin!”

Soldiers: “For our homes!”

Spearman of Winter: “Hurry up and go! Get replenished and take back the frontline!”

Archer of Winter: “Understood, leave it to us!”

Clash! Clank!

“Push forward! Push forward!”

“Slaves get out of the way! Longswords!”

The Female Paladin: “Now! Charge!”

Cavalry of Winter: “Chaaaaarge!!”

The Female Paladin: “Hit their Heavy Infantry! Destroy their formation!”

— — — — The Plains of Scilla, the Ambush Point

Officer of Metal: “What is going on?!”

Soldier of Metal: "The enemy, the enemy are Humans! Don't tell me..."

Disciple Soldier: "Mount!"

Horses whinny.

Disciple Soldier: "Officer!"

Officer of Metal: "Yes!"

Disciple Soldier: "I hand over command of the unit to you. This is a fight to the death! From their cannon sounds, it seems the enemy are few in number. I will cover your rear."

Officer of Metal: "Yes... Cannon sounds?"

Disciple Soldier: "It's fine. Just make sure to do what I say."

Officer of Metal: "But we only have a hundred cavalrymen at this ambush point! How are you going to engage—!"

Disciple Soldier: "It is not a matter of numbers." *Smiles.*

Boom!

Disciple Soldier: "Cavalry, follow me! Attack the enemy behind us!"

Officer of Metal: "Minister! Minister!"

Disciple Soldier: (Muskets?! But those were commissioned by the Crimson Scholar in the workshops and forges of the Kingdom of Metal in order to counteract the threats of heresy against us... Don't tell me, the Kingdom of Metal...)

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Disciple Soldier: "Cavalry Leader! How many are we?! Carry on!"

Cavalry Leader: "All assembled. One hundred!"

Cavalryman of Metal: "Let's go!" "Yaaa!"

Bang! Bang!

Disciple Soldier: “Listen up! Our enemies are musket units! They are using weapons similar to crossbows. With these, armour is practically useless. The only way to stay safe from them is to be behind them! However, their range is short and they can only fire one round before having to reload.”

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Disciple Soldier: “We are going to surprise them from the side and cause chaos among their ranks to save our allies! The enemy may have spearman, so we are going to charge at the highest speed possible!”

Cavalry Leader: “Yes!”

Cavalryman of Metal: “Understood!”

Disciple Soldier: “Right now, the forest is filled with combat engineers from the Kingdom of Metal. They are only soldiers in name, they are really just a group of settlers. They are comrades who have taken to the battlefield to protect their homes and the people they love. We will not leave them to die. Furthermore, our Grand Commander, the Female Paladin, is fighting on the marshy centregrounds. She has risked her life for this strategy, we will not let her down!”

Cavalry Leader: “We, the warriors of Metal, pledge our lives to your land!”

——— The Kingdom of Metal, the Palace, the Great Hall

The Hero: “Well.”

The Iron Fist King: “...”

The Queen of Ice and Snow: “...”

The Hero: “—I decided to infiltrate the heart of the Demon World as an assassin. I thought that if I could assassinate the Demon King and maybe all the powerful Demons in the Demon World, I might be able to bring peace... That's what I thought anyway. Without considering why we were at war or what it would take

to achieve peace, I stubbornly and irresponsibly tried to achieve my ends violently. I never saw that I would never be able to bring about the new world which I wanted in this manner.”

The Queen of Fairies: “Black Knight...”

Fairy Maiden: “Black Knight... They're here...!”

The Hero: “Yes, I know. — Looks like it's time for me to make my appearance.”

Rattling.

The Queen of Fairies: “What are you going to do?”

The Iron Fist King: “What is going on?!”

Rumbling.

The Lone Winter King: “What is with this shaking?!”

The Hero: “I am going to fulfil my responsibilities. Lone Winter King, Iron Fist King, Queen of Ice and Snow. I beg of you, please ensure that your successors will always carve a path for the good of their people... I really want to see what is on the other side of the hill.”

Flash!

————— The Palace of Metal, 4000km in the Sky

Flash!

The Hero: “You came.”

The Sigiled King of the Pale: “That's what I was about to say.”

The Hero: “...”

The Sigiled King of the Pale: “I never expected to get this far. Using meditation, I've managed to train up a very strong set of magical abilities.”

The Hero: "Indeed."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Ha."

The Hero: "What's so funny?"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "How sad. The Hero of old was so much more powerful than the person I am facing now."

The Hero: "..."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "—*Curse of Blazing Leaves!*"

Boom!

The Hero: "Ha! Take this! *Seal of Heavenly Ice!*"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Ha, you left an opening!"

Zap!

The Hero: "Gaaaah!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Now do you understand?"

The Hero: "Ha... Ha..."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "My power is greater than yours. You cannot hope to beat me in a direct confrontation. Your attacks are just pointless movements which leave you open to my powerful attacks. In other words, there is nothing you can do to stop this crisis. Nothing! The crisis has already begun. Isn't that your job? Saving the world!!! Isn't it? Hero! — *Curse of the Inferno Sky!*"

The Hero: "You?! You purposely aimed that at the City! Yaaaaaaaah! *Seal of Heavenly Ice!*"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Too slow!"

Bang!

The Hero: "Ahhh!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Your body and your heart are weak! You cannot bear the watch the destruction of the city below. You really are the Hero. That's all you will ever amount to. Let me teach you what it means to face the Sigiled King... I admit, your combat abilities may be better than mine. but, what will decide if you win or lose—"

The Hero: "Dammit!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "—is something else!"

Booom!

The Hero: "Ha! Fine!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Shut your impudent mouth."

The Hero: "I will cut you down. I will never leave the Humans! Even if they all hate me, even if I have to do this alone, even if I lose to you, never!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "?!"

The Hero: "Ooooooohhhh! *Spell of the Raging Typhoon!*"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Th-this is?!"

Whoooooosh.

The Hero: "Ha! Can your level of Flight Magic sustain this? This is a stronger version of the esoteric arts of Weather Magic. We can fight in this hurricane. I'll force you to move somewhere else!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "*Spell of Lightfoot! Curse of Flaming Screams! Eyes of Heaven! Charm of Solid Might!*"

The Hero: "*Charm of Haste! Sword of Lightning! Mirror Step!*"

Boooooooooom!

The Hero: "Just give up now!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: “Never! I will never let you escape unscathed!”

Boom! Clash! Boom!

The Hero: “Armour! Black Armour! I invoke thy name, blow aside the attacks of mine enemy!”

The Sigiled King of the Pale: “Why are you using that!”

The Hero: “Don't you know! Just who do you think I represent?! Can you understand what I stand for?! From your expression, I know you can't!”

Booo—m!

— — — The Plains of Scilla, the Army of the Pale

General of the Pale: “How is it going?”

Officer of the Pale: “Our forces are pressing them hard, the battle rhythm is picking up. It's just a matter of time now.”

Cavalryman of the Pale: “We have succeeded in breaking the enemy.”

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

General of the Pale: “Situation report!”

Infantry Leader of the Pale: “We have advanced fifteen paces up the hill. We are now engaged in combat with a large unit of 1,500 infantrymen!”

Yaaaa! Clash! Clink!

“*Witness the power of the Pale! “For the Sigiled King!”*

General of the Pale: “That's all the enemy amounted to. Hmph. The Female Paladin is it? How ridiculous, a beautiful maiden. I like me a young, beautiful, immature young girl; do they really think a girl can command an army?! Whichever soldier manages to capture the enemy commander alive will be immediately promoted two grades. Ready 5,000 reserve units! Heavy Infantry

assemble!"

Stomp! Stomp!

Heavy Infantry of the Pale: "We stand before you!"

General of the Pale: "The enemy line is faltering and weak! Punch through it with all you've got! We have the advantage of numbers, we outnumber them two to one! Their resistance ends here! Finish them!"

— — — The Plains of Scilla, the Front Line

The Female Paladin: "Spears on the right wing advance 50 paces! Maintain your formations! Archers support the right flank! Fire at will!"

Minister of Winter: "More spearmen to the centre line! Push! Push!"

The Female Paladin: "Carry away the casualties! Lightly injured archers, join the medical corps! Keep your heads down!"

Minister of Winter: "The left wing cavalry have returned!"

The Female Paladin: "Good work! Thanks to you the retreat of the central companies was successful. You have my gratitude, please rest now."

Mixed Cavalry Leader: "What are you saying! Female Paladin! We haven't even gotten started yet! Give us the next order!"

The Female Paladin: "...I'm sorry."

Yaaaa! Clank! Clank!

"Push! Push" "For the Sigiled King!"

"Push! Take the hill! Advance! Advance!"

Mixed Cavalry Leader: "Commander!"

The Female Paladin: "Alright! That's the spirit, cavalrymen! I am incredibly

proud of you! Spearmen, assemble! Fly out from the centre and left wing, encircle, and attack the Demons from behind!"

Mixed Cavalry Leader: "Lads! You heard the Commander! Take down those Demons!"

"*Let's go!!*"

— — — The Borders of the Kingdoms of Metal and White Night

Boom! Zap! Bang!

The Hero: "*Lightning Destruction!*"

General of the Pale: "*Curse of the Black Inferno!*"

Flames licking.

The Hero: "—!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Haaaaaaa! Haaaaa!!!"

Boom! Boom!

The Hero: "Hah! Haiya! How is it?"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Ugh."

The Hero: "This is what humans are like."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "You monster!"

Boom! Zap!

The Hero: "That's not something you should be saying, Mr. Failed Candidate."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Don't call me that!!!"

Boom!

The Hero: “?! What's that?!”

The Sigiled King of the Pale: “A Human unit?! I'll deal with them!”

The Hero: “No! *Bonds of Lightning!*”

The Sigiled King of the Pale: “Hahaha! Too late! Watch this!”

— — — — The Kingdom of Metal, the Plains of Scilla, to the South

The Demon King: “I understand the situation.”

The Chief Maid: “Your Majesty, we haven't received word from the Queen of Fairies...”

The Demon King: “I know, but all we can do is wait.”

The Chief Maid: “...”

The Demon King: “East Fortress Base Commander, verify the situation for me again.”

East Fortress Base Commander: “From here to the centre it's all shallow marshland. The speed of cavalry is sharply reduced and control is difficult. The Demons of the Pale launched repeated assaults from the West to the central hill. The Female Paladin is holding the centre with her units, and I can see that they're all excellent soldiers but their fatigue is evident. It won't be long before they break.”

The Demon King: “Silver Tiger Lord, shall we go?”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Of course. We are the eight thousand strong warriors of the Fang, we live in the wilds of the mountains! This marsh is no obstacle for those who are not weak!”

The Demon King: “All soldiers are to wear crimson red for identification.”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “All preparations have been concluded.”

The Demon King: "Then you are to advance upon the Plains of Scilla at top speed! The Silver Tiger Lord is to take his entire force and envelope the flank of the Army of the Pale! Do not hold back, turn the tides of this battle!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Understood!"

The Silver Tiger Lord: "Proud warriors of the Fang! Hear the orders of the Demon King! Take up your swords, we will swing down upon them like a fell wind, tear them to pieces! Follow me!"

----- **The Capital of White Night, a Ruined Street**

Clink, clink, clink!

Security Trooper of the Pale: "We're under attack!"

Security Trooper of the Pale: "The enemy?! Ahhh!"

Mercenary Archer: "Take the Bell Tower!"

Mercenary Swordsman: "Continue on to the barracks. Call for reinforcements."

Mercenary Archer: "Leave it to me."

Mercenary Leader: "Come, you dipshits! Let's go!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Haiya! Yaa!"

Clank! Clank!

Mercenary Leader: "Dismantle their defensive palisades!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Come on!"

Crash!

Starving Citizen: "Ahh!"

Starving Refugee: "Who are you!"

Mercenary Leader: "Oi! Are you the people of this Country?!"

Starving Citizen: "We are! You killed those—"

Mercenary Leader: "I know! Where is your Chief? Where're all the people who got captured?"

Starving Refugee: "We don't know! They were probably locked up and imprisoned somewhere. There're a lot of things going on in that big manor there..."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Big manor..."

Security Officer of the Pale: "Come on! Attack!"

Security Trooper of the Pale: "Agghh!"

Mercenary Leader: "Die!"

Hack!

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Like the Chief said! Kill them!"

Hack!

Mercenary Swordsman: "Chief! We've got the barracks under control! There doesn't seem to be many soldiers around. Where the hell are they..."

Mercenary Leader: "Got it! Most of them are in the castle. Search through the mansions of the noblemen and the larger buildings! If you find any imprisoned refugees or citizens, free them and tell them to run and just bring food and clothes! Head to the northwest forest. Got it? Get them to leave behind their valuables and luggages. If they move too slowly they will die!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Understood! Five or six of you with me. The rest of you follow the Chief."

Mercenary Leader: "We're going to attack the castle!"

Mercenary Swordsman: "Yes!"

Mercenary Leader: "Form an Archer Brigade. Control all the bell towers. After that, take the castle walls. The enemy are few and disorganised. Take advantage of their weakness!"

Mercenary Archer: "Understood!"

Thin Girl: "Chief, please..."

Mercenary Leader: "Yes?"

Thin Girl: "Water..."

Mercenary Leader: "Yeah, here. Girl, what's up with your face? It's all black?"

Thin Girl: "My mother dirtied it that way so I wouldn't get attacked..."

Mercenary Leader: "I see... How smart. In that case, stay smart! Head to the northwest with your mother! Get anyone else you see along the way to follow you. There are no more Demons there. Understood?"



Bell Tower: A tall structure from which a bell is hung. These were originally gong towers in Buddhist countries but gradually spread West and were adopted by Christian churches as tall towers with bells installed on them. The bell towers of the Holy Church of Light are closer to the latter. They are tall stone structures and are hence excellent vantage points from which the fire is taking place on the castle.

Thin Girl: "Alright."

Mercenary Leader: "Alright, hurry up! I've got work to do."

Thin Girl: "Thank you!"

Mercenary Leader: "Shut up... Go!"

— — — — The Capital of White Night, the Ruined Street

Clank, clank.

Security Officer of the Pale: "No retreat! Anyone who retreats will face the wrath of the Sigiled King!"

Security Trooper of the Pale: "Humans! You pathetic creatures, die!"

Mercenary Swordsman: "They have no idea what is happening to them, do they?"

Mercenary Archer: "Fire!"

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Security Officer of the Pale: "What?!"

Security Trooper of the Pale: "Behind?!"

Security Trooper of the Pale: "Aghhhh!"

Mercenary Leader: "How is it going?"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "The streets are almost completely under our control. Most of the citizens have fled to the southwest. I've got a small squad liberating the smaller houses."

Mercenary Leader: "Hurry up."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "And the castle?"

Mercenary Leader: "Forget that."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "?"

Mercenary Archer: "Chief! Chief!"

Mercenary Leader: "What?"

Mercenary Archer: "There's an army along the northern road. They're heading for the City of White Night!"

Mercenary Leader: "I need intelligence on their strength, equipment, and speed!"

Mercenary Archer: "They're running and they'll reach us in five minutes! It's almost evening too! It seems they are all equipped as infantry but they're too far away for me to tell."

Mercenary Leader: "Strength?"

Mercenary Archer: "From what I can see, at least ten thousand!"

Mercenary Leader: "!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "What should we do?!"

Mercenary Swordsman: "If they control the square in front of the castle, it's over!"

Mercenary Leader: "How is the evacuation going?"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "About halfway done."

Mercenary Leader: "Speed it up. Scrounge up some carriages and get those refugees too weak to walk, the sick and the elderly, on them. Make it quick!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Those are humans. Looks like reinforcements?"

Mercenary Leader: "They're enemies."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Really?!"

Mercenary Leader: "Why would there be reinforcements at such a time? Since when was the world ever so kind? Come on then, you rascals!"

Mercenaries: "Yes!" "What is it, Chief!"

Mercenary Leader: "Get me 20 horses. Go and scout ahead. The rest of you, your priority is to evacuate the people! I don't give a shit about the Demons holed up in their pathetic castle!"

— — — The Plains of Scilla, the Army of the Pale

Officer of the Pale: "What!"

Aghhh! Haaaa! Aghhh!

"*Wha—! Wh...what?!*" "*We're under attack!*" "*We're under attack!*"

Light Cavalryman of the Pale: "From behind!"

Infantry Leader of the Pale: "The left flank!"

General of the Pale: "What is going on?! Report!"

Officer of the Pale: "We're under attack!"

Whoosh! Clank!

Clink! "Enemy!"

"It's the Fang!"

Dual Swordsman of the Fang: "For the Forest Wolf Tribe of the Fang!"

Axman of the Fang: "Time to add your kills to the roster of the Black Boar Tribe of the Fang!"

Shortswordman of the Fang: "The Snow Leopard Tribe of the Fang takes to the battlefield!"

General of the Pale: "What is the Tribe of the Fang doing here?!"

Officer of the Pale: "Turn back! Heavy Infantry, come back!"

General of the Pale: "You fool!"

Bonk!

General of the Pale: "Do you want them to get massacred in front of the hill?! Light Cavalry, Heavy Cavalry, make some space for the infantry! Attack those bloody fools from the Fang!"

Light Cavalryman of the Pale: "Yes sir!"

Dual Swordsman of the Fang: "Hahaha! This is so easy!"

Stab!

Axeman of the Fang: "What do you think your horses are good for?"

Hack!

General of the Pale: "What is happening?!"

Officer of the Pale: "There are more enemies than we thought, at least 5,000!"

General of the Pale: "Throw everything we've got at them!"

Officer of the Pale: "We have no space to deploy! And the Fang is choosing to fight in the marshy terrain, we can't even send our cavalry in!"

General of the Pale: "You disgusting vermin from the Fang!"

Hack! Stab! Hack!

"Take down the Tribe of the Pale!"

"We are the brave warriors of the Fang!"

"Justice for the Demon World!"

"Courage!"

General of the Pale: "Infantry Leader!"

Infantry Leader of the Pale: “Yes!”

General of the Pale: “Select your best men and establish a bridgehead 500 paces in front! This will be a fight to the finish! Have all your free infantrymen committed against the Fang!”

Infantry Leader of the Fang: “Understood!”

----- The Plains of Scilla, the Frontline

Wahhhh! Yah! Yah!

Wahhhh! Advance! Advance!

Kill all the Humans!

Spearman of Winter: “They're pushing us harder?!”

Archer of Winter: “Not one step back!”

Clink, clink!

The Female Paladin: “No! This is a brilliant opportunity! Cavalry!”

Mixed Cavalry Leader: “Yes!”

The Female Paladin: “Time to make your entrance. Move to the front line! Support the spearmen and assist the retreat of the other cavalry! Push back the enemy's advance! I will go too.”

Minister of Winter: “What?”

The Female Paladin: “Brave men of the frozen lands of the South! Hear me! We fight for one reason! We risk our souls for one reason! Because we will not take one step backward when it comes to defending our lands! Not because the enemy are Demons! But because these are the homes you have created, your fathers have created! Remember! How you had to push aside the massive boulders to build new lands, how you tilled the frozen soil to plant your seeds of

hope in your homes! Do not throw that away! The enemy is not the Demons! They are just the invaders. The enemy is the invasion! Fight! Protect your homes! Give me one more hour!"

————— **The Kingdom of White Night, Flying Down from the Sky**

Wind rushing past.

The Hero: "Stop!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Do you really think there's someone who would stop if his enemy said that?"

Wind rushing.

The Hero: "That's not the point."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Not the point?! Everything in this world is mine, everything is the point if I am affiliated with it!"

The Hero: "Run! I don't know who you are, but run!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Fine. Drown an ocean of flames! In my inferno! It is time to taste the seven swords of the pain of hell!"

Zaaap!

The Hero: "?!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "What?! What's that?"

Zaaaap!

The Hero: "A Cleric Congregation..."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "What the hell?"

Zaaaaaaap!

The Hero: "...What is such a large group of mages doing here?"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Why? Why is this happening?!"

— — — The Kingdom of White Night, the Ruined Streets

Shadow in an Extravagant Carriage: "...The light... brighter..."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "Yes! Cleric Master! Bind them."

Cleric Master: "Clerics! Pray together with me! That is the General of the Demons, one of the heads of the enemy. Do not hesitate, bind him in the light!"

Clerics: "Yes!"

Shadow in an Extravagant Carriage: "..."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "There can't be any Demons who could escape from the combined prayer of 250 highly skilled Clerics."

Cleric Master: "Pray! Pray for the Spirit of Light! Bind him, chain him, scatter him! That is the enemy! The enemy of the Humans! Pray for the destruction of the enemy! The enemy of the Spirit of Light!"

Cleric Master: "...Hahaha... Good..."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "What shall we have them do?"

Cleric Master: "Show it the Willow of the Mercy of the Spirit!"

Clerics: "Yes!"

Zaaap... Zaap... Zaaaap...

Shadow in an Extravagant Carriage: "...Pray with our muskets too."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "Understood! Muskets!"

----- The Kingdom of Winter, above the Genesis Forest

Zaaaaaaaap!

The Hero: "My armour is cracking..."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "My body..."

The Hero: "Ha. Well, that's the way it is."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Don't be so boring. Until I cannot move any more, I will do my best to kill you."

The Hero: "Would you really rather die?"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "*Curse of the Dominions of Death...*"

The Hero: "Hey, stop?! You can't use such a mass killing spell here! You monster!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "It's pointless. Have you ever considered just whose attack you are about to receive? — Hahahahaha! You, Hero! You've been forsaken by the Humans you want to protect. You monster! You're a complete monster!"

The Hero: "No! I'm different from you!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "No, you're not! You don't get it. To preserve a place for us to live, we have to dominate the world! That is my calling! That is my destiny!!!"

Boooooom!

The Hero: "You fool."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Heh."

The Hero: "Wh...What the hell..."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "...My wounds are burning... Metal balls? We — the

two of us—”

The Hero: “Wh...Why...”

Bang! Bang!

Chapter 9, “In a Boat on a Bloodstained River.”

——— The Kingdom of Metal, the Plains of Scilla, the South

The Demon King: “I'm worried.”

The Chief Maid: “What's wrong?”

The Demon King: “It's just... What is the Female Paladin doing?”

The Chief Maid: “?”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “She's defending that hill to the end?”

The Demon King: “Why?”

The Chief Maid: “...”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “Hmm, she's their commander. This is fast becoming an attrition war. Is she relying on us for reinforcements?”

The Demon King: “Then we should let her.”

The Chief Maid: “Your Majesty, if we do that, we risk ruining the reputations of everybody on this battlefield.”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “It's a battle, we have no choice. Apart from sitting here and watching it happen...”

The Demon King: “Ruining—”

The Chief Maid: “?”

The Demon King: “Commander, send a message to the Silver Tiger Lord. All forces to move to the West. Top haste!”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “But we have the upper hand.”

The Demon King: “I know. Now send the message! Hurry up! This is of prime importance! Begin the retreat!”

— — — — **The Plains of Scilla, the Army of the Pale** Officer of the Pale: “General! General!”

General of the Pale: “What is it!”

Officer of the Pale: “The Fang are retreating!”

General of the Pale: “What? ...Weren't they winning? How are our men doing?!”

Officer of the Pale: “Half have given chase. Should I send the cavalry in to mop them up?”

General of the Pale: “Don't be a fool, what use are the cavalry in these marshlands. But this is a good sign. Prepare the Heavy Infantry who were engaging the Fang. By the time the sun goes down I want all the Human units to be surrounded and destroyed!”

Officer of the Pale: “Yes!”

Infantry Leader of the Pale: “All forces advance!”

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

Scout: “Report! Report! General! An enemy force to our rear!”

General of the Pale: “What are you panicking about?”

Scout: “An army from the Holy Empire has appeared to our rear. They managed to slip past the border security...”

General of the Pale: “The Holy Empire? Those are reinforcements... Let's wait for them to appear. Looks like all that saltpetre is really paying for itself. Hahahaha.”

Officer of the Pale: “How far away? Numbers and equipment?”

Scout: “They are at the ridge and will arrive in 30 minutes. Numbers are countless, at least 30,000.”

General of the Pale: “Thirty thousand! Ha! The Strategist has really gone ahead of himself. At this rate, the Three Kingdoms will fall in an instant! The threat of

the Fang has passed and we have not broken! From now on, the Infantry units will lead the way!"

Scout Rider: "General! General! Report!"

General of the Pale: "Calm down."

Scout Rider: "Countless soldiers from the Holy Empire—"

General of the Pale: "I already received that report you fool!"

Scout Rider: "That army has attacked our forces with an unknown weapon! Our entire rear guard has been completely annihilated!"

General of the Pale: "Wh...Wha...What!!!"

----- Near the Kingdom of White Night

Shadow in an Extravagant Carriage: "...Those two, the King of the Pale and the person beside him."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "Yes."

Shadow in an Extravagant Carriage: "No matter what...takethem down... That thing...cannot attack...humans... Use curses or exultations, surround...ridicule, reject it. That way...it...will lose its power... Put in your prayers...ships...people...life...reject..."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "Understood."

Cleric Master: "Your Holiness my Patriarch."

Cleric: "There are going down! From that height, there's no help for them!"

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "Do not hold back! I won't rest until I SEE THEIR BODIES! No, they must still be alive! Surround the place, exterminate them!"

Cleric Master: "Yes!"

Musketeer: "Search units ready!"

Shadow in an Extravagant Carriage: "...There will be few chances. For sure..."

Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "We'll find them for sure. For the will of the Light, even if we have to pull out all the grass by its roots, we will fulfil the red dream!"

— — **The Plains of Scilla, near the Centre**

Crack!!!

The Demon King: "Ahhhhh! Ahhhh!"

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty! Your Majesty!"

Crack!!!

Knight of the Gate: "What is that sound?"

The Demon King shudders.

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty, pull yourself together!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Is she alright? She's completely pale."

The Demon King: "—Why, what are those doing here?! Why?"

Bang! Bang!!!

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty!"

The Demon King: "Who, why — So many!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "What do you know, Your Majesty!"

The Demon King: "No! The Female Paladin is going to die! Those are even scarier than the Demons of the Pale! The Female Paladin! At this rate — She can't! No!"

The Chief Maid: "Your Majesty!"

Bang!

The Chief Maid: "Pull yourself together."

The Demon King: "..."

The Chief Maid: "If you don't get back on your feet, you're going to die!"

Bang! Bang!

Knight of the Gate: "They're close! By the ridge to the East!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Come, you must escape!"

The Demon King: "..."

The Chief Maid: "Over here."

Knight of the Gate: "They are here! They're advancing on us!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Where did all these infantry come from. What're those sticks they're holding?!"

The Demon King: "Guns... Muskets."

Knight of the Gate: "!"

Bang! Bang!

"Agghhhh!" "My hand!"

"I can't see, I can't see!"

"What's happening!"

"Aghhhh!!!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Dammit, there's too many of them! What are they!"

The Chief Maid: “!”

Knight of the Gate: “There are infantry here too!”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “They have no cavalry?”

The Demon King: “Not to the East.”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “But even the West.”

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Musketeer of Light: “Haa! Haaa!”

Musketeer of Light: “Die! Heretics!”

Musketeer of Light: “Everyone from the South is a heretic!”

Musketeer of Light: “You're the same as monsters! Die, witch!”

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Demon King: “—!”

The Chief Maid: “!!!”

Hack!

Musketeer of Light: “Agghhhh!”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Sorry we're late, Your Majesty!”

The Demon King: “Silver Tiger Lord!”

The East Fortress Base Commander: “You're safe!”

The Chief Maid: “Why is there so much blood?”

The Silver Tiger Lord: “Come now! The Silver Tiger Lord made a promise that I would never rest until I have saved the life of Your Majesty three times over! Now, we the Fang will open a route for your escape to the West. These aren't

the Pale, and we may not have those magic things, but we've got quite a lot of soldiers here as well!"

The Demon King: "!"

The East Fortress Base Commander: "Hurry! We have not a moment to lose!"

— — — **The Borders of the Kingdom of White Night, the Genesis Forest**

Butler: "!"

The Hero: "Grandpa!"

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Agghh! Ahh!"

Butler: "Hehehehe."

The Hero: "Grandpa! Grandpa! What are you doing here!"

Butler: "I thought it would be a cool time to make my appearance.
Nyohohohoho..."

The Hero: "You're covered in holes! Why did you cover me! And at that age too!
You haven't even been very good at recovering from colds!"

Butler: "I'm a gentleman after all."

The Hero: "Don't be stupid! *Spell of Healing!*"

Butler: "I can see over the yonder. Ack, ack... Ack!"

The Hero: "Wh-why? Why are you even here..."

Butler: "I was looking for the Pale... Heh. I've always been very good at stealth...
I just kind of found my way to where you were..."

The Hero: "Why, why! Why isn't the spell working!"

Butler: "...Hero, I've lost too much blood. Heh. You can't heal me with just that..."

More importantly, hurry up and finish him off. That guy is damaged too."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "Aggh. Ack! Ugh... Huma...n."

The Hero: "I don't care about that!"

Butler: "Nyohoho... To kill that guy... I've been searching for ways... Finally, there's one here."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "This... This is the end...is...it...?"

Leaves rustling.

The Hero: "!"

Butler: "At such...a...time...!"

Leaves rustling.

Mercenary Leader: "Don't stare, everybody could see your battle from the ground. Hey, bandage him up and get him some wine."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Got it."

Butler: "...Sorry."

The Hero: "Who are you guys?"

Mercenary Leader: "Let's not talk about grandpa, but you look like you're at your limit. That Demon there is about to become worm food too. So even Demons have squabbles?"

Butler: "He's not a Demon."

The Hero: "I'm not very far from one."

Mercenary Leader: "..."

The Hero: "...."

Mercenary Leader: "Need some help?"

Butler: "Yes, please."

Leaves rustling.

Mercenary Archer: "Chief. Those guys with the weird sticks and some heavily armoured units are scattering throughout the forest. Looks like the some noble bastards from the Central Continent."

Mercenary Leader: "Hey, bro."

The Hero: "Ah! It's just a flesh wound."

Butler: "You can't go. I will go."

The Hero: "What are you talking about? Your injuries are worse than mine!"

Butler: "It's not a matter of that. Hero, you...can't take those bullets. You can't become the target of their prayers."

The Hero: "What are you talking about?!"

Butler: "You cannot become the enemy of the Humans. I will go, you must run away... Nyohohoho."

The Hero: "I don't get you at all!"

Mercenary Leader: "Hey, bro."

The Hero: "Shut up!"

Mercenary Leader: "You shut up! I couldn't care less about your nonsense so you'd better reply now! Don't you think you should at least say 'thank you' to the person who just saved your sorry asses!"

The Hero: "What, I did! That's completely unimportant?"

Mercenary Leader: "How many times?"

The Hero: "How am I supposed to remember? A lot of times."

Mercenary Leader: "Really now. Heh. That's nice to hear...not! I didn't even

want to hear you say it once!"

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Chief..."

Mercenary Leader: "Grandpa, can I?"

Butler: "Of course."

Mercenary Leader: "Hmph. Sorry, but I won't be passing up on it."

The Sigiled King of the Pale: "H-human. I won't-I won't forgive you. Don't lay one finger...on me..."

Mercenary Leader: "Well, this is war. Forgive me."

Hack!

Mercenary Leader: "Alright, ehh, come over. Get this old man and that bro on a horse."

Mercenary Spear Horseman: "Hurry up."

Butler: "Ahh!"

The Hero: "What are you doing!"

Mercenary Leader: "Shut up! I don't even want to look at you guys, with your blood spurting from your body like water fountains!"

Mercenaries: "Ahahahaha!"

Mercenaries: "That's true."

Mercenaries: "Really!"

Mercenary Leader: "Oi, fools! Help out! From here on out, you are delivery boys. We're going to get these two back safely. Hold on to that ring! These are probably important people. Let's take them to that Disciple Nobleman boy in the Palace of Ice. This is an important mission. Can I leave it to you useless youngins?!"

Mercenaries: "Yes chief!"

Butler: "..."

The Hero: "You fools, I can still walk! Don't decide this on your own! I can still—!"

Mercenary Leader: "Bro, I don't know you at all, but it's because you try too hard why grandpa there is dying. Grandpa tried to protect you, not to save your body but to save your soul! Get it, fool!"

The Hero: "!"

Mercenary Leader: "Alright, y'all! Mount up! We're going to charge that group of noble bastards! Let's sing some songs while we're at it! Dipshits! We're about to become knights!"

Mercenaries: "Alright!"

Mercenaries: "Fools! Chief is the King of White Night!"

Mercenary Leader: "Ahahahahaha! You could say that! If you are all knights then I must be the King! Alright, let's go you pack of worms!"

The Hero: "Wait!"

Horses stampeding.

The Hero: "Hey, let the horse stop. It's going to die, it's really going to die."

Young Mercenary: "Don't argue with me."

The Hero: "..."

Young Mercenary: "Heh, I'm surprised he's still alive at all."

Tiny Mercenary: "But..."

Horse trotting.

Tiny Mercenary: "The Chief's orders are absolute. Otherwise, everyone would

be dead."

The Hero: "I didn't need you to save me. Why? Why? Why?"

Young Mercenary: "..."

Tiny Mercenary: "The Chief is a Hero. He saved us. We're mostly orphans, but in those streets there, people were thanking us. Even tiny people like us. We experienced something there that you can only imagine."

Young Mercenary: "That's right. He's a brilliant man. A splendid man. He's the kind of independent man who gets to choose when and where he dies."

The Hero: "What the hell..."

— — — — On a Shore Rippling With Blue Light

Bang! Bang!

Aghhhh!

My hand!!!

Heretics! Die heretics!

Dammit! Dammit!

Put it out! My foot, it's on fire!

Somebody! Give me a hand! I'm trapped under this tree!

Boom! Bang!

I can't see anything! Help...

You are all enemies of the Spirit!

The schism between the Humans ends now!

Spirit of Light! Give us your Mercy!

What is going on!

Aghhhhh!

Boom! Boom!

The Mage: “...”

The Elder Sister Maid: “...I understand.”

The Mage: “...”

The Elder Sister Maid: “I understand.”

The Mage: “.....”

The Elder Sister Maid: “Why did it become like this?”

The Mage: “...Cause and effect.”

The Elder Sister Maid: “Cause and effect?! Cause and effect means everybody has to die like that? How could you let such a thing happen!”

The Mage: “How could you let something outside cause and effect happen?”

The Elder Sister Maid: “...”

The Mage: “...”

The Elder Sister Maid: “...Well, that's...”

The Mage: “When two different existences are proceeding at contradictory vectors, there tends to arise ideological differences which can create a state of tension. However, if the two are close to each other, they can influence one another, causing each of their vectors to streamline with the other. This relationship can be drawn as a curve. Reports have shown that such an occurrence will basically lead to a paradigm shift.”

The Elder Sister Maid: “...”

The Mage: "The friction of shifting ideologies is satisfied by bloodshed. With sufficient blood, the wheels of motion can turn smoothly."

The Elder Sister Maid: "Does it have to be this way?! This is a lie! There must be a way to curve towards peace!"

The Mage: "There are no examples of that. I know no way of which consciousness can be shifted without bloodshed. Even if there is no physical bloodshed, there is at least some level of spiritual bloodshed."

The Elder Sister Maid: "...That's a lie."

The Mage: "It is not."

The Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Mage: "Sometimes, it is an individual who witnesses the bloodshed of the many. Sometimes, the burden of pleasing the wheels of change with the flowing blood of thousands of people, maybe even tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, is placed on the shoulders of just one person. That person may have caused all that blood, but how much does the person have to bleed to make up for it? It's almost as if the person did not sacrifice anything at all."

The Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Mage: "That is not a lie. In any case the evidence is that — you can feel it too."

The Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Mage: "Now you understand. Now you have learnt...what it means to conquer the Demon World. It is a revolution. However, for the revolution to succeed, it will require the necessary amount of blood (The Hero + The Demon King) and an additional amount of $+α$."

The Elder Sister Maid: "I have no idea what you are talking about."

The Mage: "...There is no need for you to understand. Because you can feel it."

The Elder Sister Maid: "That's—"

The Mage: "That's why you're searching for your path. Or am I wrong?"

The Elder Sister Maid: "What do you mean that's why!"

The Mage: "That which the Hero was unable to do. And especially with the world the way it is. If you manage to save it, you will probably be revered as a god; but if you fail, you will simply be erased from memory. The Hero was really close to obliterating the Demons but if he did, there would be no meaning to his own existence. The Hero is like a star, shining so brightly it destroys itself."

Elder Sister Maid: "Don't tell me...you are..."

The Mage: "That is the truth."

Elder Sister Maid: "In that case, you are evil."

The Mage: "Is there really a difference between conscious sin and unconscious sin?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes!"

The Mage: "...In that case, we should all just be ignorant. If we tried to know as little as possible, we would have no sin whatsoever, right?"

Elder Sister Maid: "That's not the point!"

The Mage: "..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Blood, blood is just drops. — Just who do you think this entire sea of blood was bled for? Somebody who let them die."

The Mage: "...That is a sort of truth as well."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Mage: "Are you feeling unwell?"

Elder Sister Maid: "Of course."

The Mage: "In that case, you should follow your path and save who you can."

Elder Sister Maid: "...!"

The Mage: "You should not forget. You are in the same boat as well. You were saved from all that flowing blood. Onto a boat floating on this river of blood."

Elder Sister Maid: "But! But!"

The Mage: "...I'll send you out."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

The Mage: "...This library is not suited for you after all."

— — — — — The Plains of Scilla, the Frontlines

Boom! Bang!

"Aghhhhh!"

"Noooo!!!"

The Female Paladin: "What the hell is this?!"

Minister of Winter: "Stay strong! Men of the South! Cavalry, file out from the left wing and attack!"

Boom! Bang!

Spearman of Winter: "For the Female Paladin!"

Archer of Winter "For our homes!"

Infantry of the Pale: "Save us!!!"

Boom! Bang!

Aghhhh! I can't see them! Invisible spears?!

The Female Paladin: "—! Minister!"

Minister of Winter: "Yes!"

The Female Paladin: "Raise the smoke alarm! Regroup! Pull back eighty paces from the frontline!"

Minister of Winter: "What is going on?!"

The Female Paladin: "A new enemy has appeared behind the Demons of the Pale with countless numbers. — I fear they are Crusaders from the Church. I never expected them to be here so quickly. And I have a very bad feeling about that sound... In any case, raise three smoke alarms!"

Scout: "Commander! The enemy are definitely from the Church and they number in the tens of thousands!"

Minister of Winter: "Tens of thousands?!"

Scout: "They are equipped with unknown weapons and are attacking indiscriminately, whether we are Demons or Humans!"

Minister of Winter: "What?! We had such a hard time with just twenty thousand Demons of the Pale and now we have to face them?! This is the end..."

The Female Paladin: "It's fine, we're still alive. We haven't been defeated yet. Maintain the line of defence, avoid the wet marshlands and persevere! We are not yet into the afternoon but the temperature is dropping fast. A fog is about to move in."

Minister of Winter: "...Understood!"

The Female Paladin: "Hurry up and evacuate the wounded! Apart from the red line marked on the battle plans, all other routes are forbidden. All units move!"

Spearman of Winter: "Push! Push!"

Archer of Winter: "This is our Kingdom!"

The Female Paladin: (The enemy has changed... I don't know how far back their cooperation goes. But it's no coincidence that we're fighting them both at the same time.)

——— The Plains of Scilla, the Ambush Point

Lieutenant of Metal: "That's—"

Infantry of Metal: "The smoke alarm! Sir! Three columns! The message is for all units are to pull back and regroup!"

Lieutenant of Metal: "Got it. Sound the drums for the settler militia in the forest!"

Infantry of Metal: "Yes!"

Bong! Bong! Bong!

Infantry of Metal: "They will be coming immediately."

Lieutenant of Metal: "They're here..."

Settler Militia of Metal: "The water level has risen..."

Lieutenant of Metal: "It's fine, it's just going back to what it was in the previous years."

Infantry of Metal: "How is the water route?"

Settler Militia of Metal: "Yes... It's fine! It flows through the marshlands. However, in just twenty more minutes, the water level will engulf it again!"

Lieutenant of Metal: "And the equipment?"

Infantry of Metal: "No problem. They're floating on the water."

Lieutenant of Metal: "Then we have achieved our objectives here. I hope the Minister for Defence and the Female Paladin will be safe..."

——— The Plains of Scilla, the Army of the Pale

General of the Pale: "Retreat now!"

Officer of the Pale: “Where to!”

Boom! Bang!

General of the Pale: “North! Infantry units are to form a circular formation and serve as the rear guard. All units, beginning with cavalry, retreat to the North!”

Officer of the Pale: “That's...”

General of the Pale: “What?! What is it now!”

Officer of the Pale: “The water level in the marshlands has been increasing steadily. At this rate, the flatlands are going to become waterlogged and the route will be lost...”

General of the Pale: “Route will be lost? Even if the water level increases, it's not going to go up to your knees, is it? Don't be scared! Even if we have to, we'll dismount and push through on foot!”

Boom! Bang!

Officer of the Pale: “Yes! Let's go! Cavalry! With me! Cut a path through the enemy units!”

— — — — The Plains of Scilla, the Frontlines

The Female Paladin: “Fire arrows!”

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Minister of Winter: “How is it?”

Blazing fire.

Spearman of Winter: “?!”

Archer of Winter: “What?!”

The Female Paladin: “All units retreat!”

Minister of Winter: "What's with this light?"

The Female Paladin: "We've designed the water routes to snake through the entire battlefield. Since they're peat-covered they burn easily, allowing us to create this inferno of a maze. The Demons of the Pale will never be able to establish a stable formation and now they're trapped in the blaze with no way to advance and no way to retreat..."

Minister of Winter: "Then is this...our victory...?"



Rear Guard: During a retreat, they serve to deter the enemy from pursuing and killing the fleeing soldiers. Having fought all the way to the end, they must now support the retreat of their friends, retreating at the very end only when all the others have succeeded. Hence it is common for these units to be completely wiped out even if they have performed their mission successfully.

The Female Paladin: "That's fine. It seems that the bulk of the Church forces are on the mountain paths. These are probably just an advance party...but in any case, we have no time to waste. Hurry up! More people to tend to the wounded!"

Spearman of Winter: "Yes!"

Archer of Winter: "Alright! Let's go home!"

The Female Paladin: "The flames are all around... Make sure to stick to the path!"

----- The Plains of Scilla, the Chaotic Battleground

Soldier of Light panting.

Spearman of Light: "Nothing here, advance!"

Musketeer of Light "Hey, wait. If we don't reload we can't fire later."

Platoon Leader of Light: "Hey, what are you doing, hurry up!"

Musketeer of Light "Heh, I was chosen. I was chosen! I am a musketeer... Eh?"

Platoon Leader of Light: "What is it?"

Musketeer of Light "There's something oily floating on the surface of the water... Ah!"

Soldier of Light: "Fire! Get away from the fire! Aghhhhh!!!"

----- The Plains of Scilla, the Mountain Path

Raging fire.

Crown Prince Marshal: "Oho..."

Holy Imperial General: "Your Royal Highness, this is—"

Crown Prince Marshal: "I fear it is some plan of the Three Kingdoms."

Holy Imperial General: "Even so..."

Reconnaissance Unit: "Report! The fire you see ahead of us has completely engulfed the east side of the plains! It is covering a distance of 15km at present!"

Holy Imperial General: "Just how did they manage that?"

Reconnaissance Unit: "I apologise, I'm not sure..."

Crown Prince Marshal: "The water paths."

Holy Imperial General: "Sorry?"

Crown Prince Marshal: "With daybreak came a strong mist. They placed a special oil on the water and let it flow down. They are the only ones who know the course of the water paths."

Holy Imperial General: "Hmph."

Crown Prince Marshal: "Fine. Remaining strength is to retreat."

Holy Imperial General: "Is that really alright?"



Special Oil: This is likely petroleum. It was known since ancient times that petroleum could burn on the surface of water but it was only used extensively beginning from the 19th century.

Crown Prince Marshal: "We did not come here to exterminate the Tripartite Economic Union."

Holy Imperial General: "Yes."

Crown Prince Marshal: "We came to control the Kingdom of White Night and secure the path that could be used to invade the Continent. That is our first objective. Our second objective is for the Faithful of Light to exterminate the Demon forces on our lands. With this, from now on, the amount of support and recruitment for the Holy Crusades is likely to increase dramatically. Our third objective is to field test these new weapons, the muskets. — No matter how amazing the weapon is, it has to have its pros and cons. It is only with field testing that we can understand these characteristics."

Holy Imperial General: "How acute. It is exactly as Your Royal Highness suggests. Thank you for opening my eyes during this glorious victory."

Crown Prince Marshal: "It's too early to say that. We have to analyse the attrition rate and the equipment feedback during this battle."

Holy Imperial General: "Yes."

Crown Prince Marshal: "If you become drunk on victory, you will fail to see what is beneath your feet and you will surely be brought down by it... Hey, what about the thing I told you about earlier?"

Holy Imperial General: "Sound the retreat for all forces immediately! Hey! That's an order!"

Crown Prince Marshal: (...That being said, the Commander of the Tripartite Economic Union was a woman. She truly is some sort of hero. What splendid use of her forces... This inferno among the reeds has neutralised the overwhelming power of her enemies but in order to achieve this, she managed a completely harmonious use of both archers and spearmen in defensive positions to control and protect the central hill. This unwavering conviction and the meticulousness required to ensure there were no breaks in her line is truly the mark of an incredible commander. It is truly a waste that I do not have such talent on my side.)

Chapter 10, “Shall we go together?”

——— The Battlefield, the Red Sun Rising in the Evening

Disciple Soldier: “Aghhhhhh...”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “Ughh, ughhhhhh...”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “They died...”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “They all died...”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “So many!!!”

Collapses.

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “When I pulled back, a whole bunch of settlers... and lots of my subordinates... They all charged at that wall of muskets. They covered me, they covered their comrades. In that way, in that way! They all passed together. Even though they were my comrades!!!”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “...They won't ever laugh again.”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: “They won't talk again...”

Lieutenant of Metal: “...”

Disciple Soldier: "They won't drink, they won't curse, they won't raise their voices at me, howling with laughter, joking without respect..."

Lieutenant of Metal: "Minister..."

Disciple Soldier: "They protected us."

Lieutenant of Metal: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "Why couldn't I protect them."

Lieutenant of Metal: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "..."

Lieutenant of Metal: "Let's go back."

Disciple Soldier: "..."

Lieutenant of Metal: "The Kingdom of Metal still has many people who need their Minister for Defence. — Minister... They are waiting, the people of whom our brothers and friends died here today, died protecting!"

Disciple Soldier: "..."

Lieutenant of Metal: "..."

Disciple Soldier: "...I suppose that's true."

Lieutenant of Metal: "Yes."

Disciple Soldier: "I'm sorry I let you see that shameful side of me."

Lieutenant of Metal: "Definitely."

Disciple Soldier: "?"

Lieutenant of Metal: "We'll definitely win next time. And then you can laugh."

———— On the Central Continental Highway, the Wind Blowing

Wind blowing fiercely.

Elder Sister Maid: “...”

Disciple Bard: “...”

Elder Sister Maid: “Miss Bard, did you see that?”

Disciple Bard: “...Yeah.”

Elder Sister Maid: “...”

Disciple Bard: “I think so... I was myself, but I could somehow feel it through you, as if I was there on that blue beach as well...”

Elder Sister Maid: “...”

Disciple Bard: “There was anguish.”

Elder Sister Maid: “Yes.”

Disciple Bard: “And anger.”

Elder Sister Maid: “And some unearthly music of pain.”

Elder Sister Maid: “...I don't understand. I don't understand!”

Disciple Bard: “...”

Elder Sister Maid: “They died.”

Disciple Bard: “Yes.”

Elder Sister Maid: “In incredible numbers. As many deaths as there are grains of sand on that beach.”

Disciple Bard: “Hey, Elder Sister Maid, you've noticed, right?”

Elder Sister Maid: “Sorry?”

Unwraps turban.

Disciple Bard: "I'm taking off my turban."

Elder Sister Maid: "Bard..."

Disciple Bard: "There, you've seen my pointy ears, right? I am a member of the Tribe of the Forest Fairies. We sing, we tell stories, and we record the happenings of the world. Now and then, past and present. We have recorded everything that has happened for thousands and thousands of years. That's right. Ehehe... I'm a Demon."

Elder Sister Maid: "You are a Bard."

Disciple Bard: "I thought I should tell you."

Wind blows fiercely.

Disciple Bard: "I am the Disciple Bard. Seeking to know the tale of the Holy Relic, I left the Demon World. I am a Demon. But you know that. I'm sure you know that...I want to sing. I hope you will let me sing. Just a bit."

Elder Sister Maid: "..."

Disciple Bard: "You don't understand? Well, that's to be expected."

Elder Sister Maid: "Umm..."

Disciple Bard: "I have decided my path. I decided it at the start... I will go too. I will pay too. I don't mind bleeding. I will pay my way with my songs."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Disciple Bard: "You are also...my teacher's..."

Elder Sister Maid: "Sorry?"

Disciple Bard: "No... Nothing."

Wind blows fiercely.

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Disciple Bard: "Hey, don't cry."

Elder Sister Maid: "But—"

Disciple Bard: "I will go. Because I know. Because I have seen. There are some things I know I have to do. That's why, this is farewell."

Elder Sister Maid: "Yes."

Disciple Bard: "Keep your ears peeled. If you hear a song on the streets that reminds you of yourself, then that is my voice. My song. My thoughts."

Elder Sister Maid nods.

Disciple Bard: "I pray that you will also find your path. The Tribe of Forest Fairies will forever be your friends."

———— The Kingdom of White Night, on a Balcony

Crown Prince Marshal: "Praise be the exalted name of the Holy Spirit! O, Children of the Light, chosen warriors! We have finally retaken the Kingdom of White Night. Look! Look at the ruined city. The Kingdom of White Night has certainly fought as the shield of the Continent. A holy shield, fighting for the holiest goals of the Church of the Central Continent! But despite their honour, the cowardly Demon Race has reduced them to rubble in a surprise attack. The ruins you see before you is proof that the violence and destruction of the Demons are beyond hope of saving. It is their alliance with the heretics, the Three Kingdoms of the South, that has caused this."

"However! We have taken the city! We sing our songs of victory! We bathe in the light of the new dawn. By the deathless grace of the Holy Spirit, we have secured our victory. O, Children of the Light, chosen warriors. By this Kingdom at the borders of the Continent, with the strength of your arms, we have beaten back the Demons, and here we will restore the Kingdom of White Night!!!"

Yeahhhhhh!!! Yeahhhhhh!!!

Soldier of Light: "All is as the Spirit wills it!"

Soldier of Light: "All is as the Spirit wills it!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Look. This is the southern end of the continent! If we sailed for just a short distance on these seas, braving the fierce waves, we would reach the new continent from which we can cross through the Portal and take the fight to the Demons! With the defeat of the Demons here, the route to our invasion is surely left open. If we were to let this opportunity slip by, we would only be opening ourselves up to countless more tragedies."

"The muskets you have in your hands are staffs of fire bestowed unto the Church by our most noble Holy Spirit of Light. I'm sure all of you know how powerful they are. This time, we will be welcomed into the light! Now is the time! If you have yet to prove yourself to the Spirit, make your preparations now, because it will be time for us to demonstrate our faith!"

"We, who have left our homes and our lands, who have journeyed to be plunged into the fires of war; even if it takes decades, even if we have only one soldier left standing, we will triumph over these evil Demons, we will usher in a period of faith and spread the message of grace by the Holy Spirit throughout the world!"

"This is something I believe in strongly. No matter what comes our way, we will definitely be able to tide through it. In other words, we are the will of the Spirit! Listen to what is behind you. Listen to the heavy marching of boots on that faraway plain. Today, right now, your comrades are celebrating the liberation of the Kingdom of White Night and are gathering to join our cause. They are receiving cartloads of new muskets, cloths, horses, and barley. For their sake, we will begin constructing ships. We will organise this city for this effort. Beginning from this evening, there will be a new Kingdom of White Night, the personal demesne of the Holy Patriarch of the Holy Church of Light and the frontline for our offensive against the Demon World."

"Come, let us open the wine! Should we not celebrate our victory! And when the night gives way to bright in this glorious midsummer, let us begin to construct our ships! All the tools have been prepared. Tonight is our victory! You have taken up arms, listened to the noble words of the Spirit, followed to wise commands of your commanders, and for you the undying flowers of victory bloom! To the Demon World! There, for sure, we will retake our Holy Relic!"

Yeahhhhhh!!! Yeeeeaaaahhhh!!!

Soldier of Light: "All is as the Spirit wills it!"

Soldier of Light: "All is as the Spirit wills it!"

Soldier of Light: "All is as the Spirit wills it!"

Crown Prince Marshal: "Raise the flag of the Spirit! For our comrades!"

----- The Kingdom of Metal, the Central Plaza

The Iron Fist King: "My people, my brave commanders and soldiers who have returned from the Plains of Scilla. Nothing makes me happier than to see the safe return of our men. This was a battle fought by your friends, your husbands, your sons, and your lovers. And many others. But more importantly, this was a battle fought by the hearts of the Three Kingdoms, by brave and loyal warriors."

--What was the Battle of the Plains of Scilla? The Tribe of the Demons of the Pale, who conquered our neighbouring country, is but a faction that fled the Demon World after plunging it into chaos. They are criminals in the Demon World and they are criminals now. But that has nothing to do with us because for us, this is a battle to protect our beloved land, the land of our fathers, and to save the lands which our settlers have so lovingly cultivated. This is a battle to repel the invaders!"

"I, the Iron Fist King, proclaim that we have lost many. In this battle, more than two thousand people will never return home. However, I also proclaim. I proclaim a great victory in the Plains of Scilla. In any case, we have repelled the invaders and we stand proudly on the lands of our forefathers today. With this battle, our war with the Demons of the Pale is at an end. May their souls rest in the Light. We have protected our home!"

Yeaahhhh!!! Yeaaaaahhhh!!!

The Lone Winter King: "Brothers in the Kingdom of Metal! Listen to me. At this Plains of Scilla, an extremely important thing has happened! The countries of the Central Continent have fielded a combined unit, along with the Holy

Crusaders from the Holy Church of Light, to kill us indiscriminately. It is true that to them, we are a nation of heretics. But we are adherents of the Holy Order of the Lake, an order wherein the Spirit resides, and we are also believers. We have looked at the Central Continent as mentors or even older brothers but today, they seek to behead us and drown us in our own tears."

"We have an unpleasant history with the Central Continent. We are a child of the Central Continent. But even then, we have protected them against the incessant threat of the Demons. They have scorned our fathers as mercenaries, barbarians who know only of war; but we have defended them at the expense of the South. Our spirit is one with the Continent! Look beside you. These are not serfs or slaves but your comrades! Put your hands on your chests. That beat is the beat of freedom! We are a free people and we step freely on our free land. This freedom is independence. Not just of our nation, but the independence of our hearts. From tilling the land, from our hard work to make the wastelands arable, we have tided over difficult times to forge our independent character!"

Yeaahhhhh!!! That's right!!!

Our land is the land of the South!!!

The Lone Winter King: "I want to leave you with a thought. Why do we shed our blood? It is all for the land. It is all for the comrades whom we protect with our lives. That is why we have risen up to face the threat. All we ask for is peace, so we can be content, so we can try to make our lives more prosperous, so we can aim for that little bit of happiness. We have no need to take the purses of others to build our own prosperity."

"It doesn't matter who invades our lands, whether they are Demons, whether they are Human kingdoms. No matter which army tries to threaten us, for our homes and for our lands, we will fight to the very end! But we are not foolish people who would starve and die in blood. What we hope for is peace and prosperity. If we could, we would join hands with the Central Continent, neither would we hesitate to form a ceasefire with the Demons. Our minds work for one purpose, so that no matter what the difficulty and hardship is, we will always be able to come out on top!"

Iron Fist King! Iron Fist King! Lone Winter King! Lone Winter King!

The Lone Winter King: "I have one piece of happy news. Many of you may know this or may have already been vaccinated. A terrible pestilence of smallpox and cowpox has swept across the land, massacring countless people, more so than any war we have ever fought. Up till now, we have had no defence, but we have finally made a discovery!"

Murmuring...

R-really?

It's true! Look, I was vaccinated already!

My village was vaccinated last year and no one has caught the pox yet!

The Queen of Ice and Snow: "I do not understand the will of the Spirit. The Spirit's intentions are deep, and with our limited human understanding, we cannot hope to understand all of it. However, please remember. And tonight, I want each and every one of you to relect on this."

"The Holy Church of Light claims that the staffs which they have been using to massacre our soldiers by spitting fire at them are a gift from the Spirit of Light. Hence, you must think that our Holy Order of the Lake has received this vaccination and the medicine to cure people of smallpox from the Holy Spirit. In truth, this medicine was developed by an incredibly intelligent scholar who came up with it during a visit to the Demon World. You must surely be wondering about the different technologies bestowed to the two churches."

Murmuring... Murmuring...

The Lone Winter King: "There is one thing I can answer for you. We, the Three Kingdoms, wish for peace and prosperity. As far as we can, we will develop ways to achieve that. Of course, we will protect our motherland and we will never allow anyone else to take it. And hence, I have another important announcement to make."

What? What is it?

The Lone Winter King: "Starting today, the Tripartite Economic Union will be disbanded. We welcome new friends into our fold!"

For real? What's going on?!

We have more comrades?

Really! Oh, it must be the Kingdom of the Lake then!

The Lone Winter King: “The Kingdom of the Lake, the Kingdom of Branches, the Kingdom of Reeds, the Kingdom of Red Horses, and seven Free Cities have expressed interest in joining our Union and have gradually fulfilled the first criteria of the emancipation of their serfs. We are no longer the Three Kingdoms. We can finally bid farewell to our lonely existence at this corner in the South, enduring the overwhelming odds. We fight to protect the land. We seek peace and prosperity, and whomsoever wishes to seek it with us, we will cooperate and embrace unhesitatingly.”

“Our roots extend deeper into the world, our ships depart for the same tomorrow! Together, we are a people who embody the spirit of the South with our deep adoration for our land, love for our comrades, benevolence and virtue, industry, and above all, our burning passion for liberty and independence. Here today, I proclaim to you that the Alliance of the South has begun!”

...Alliance of the South? That's right, the Alliance of the South!

We're no longer heretics, we have comrades!

We're going to liberate all the serfs of the Continent!

I finally have new markets for my iron products!

Not just that, we can finally import a whole range of things!

Iron Fist King! Iron Fist King! Long live the Iron Fist King!

Lone Winter King! Lone Winter King! Long live the Lone Winter King!

Queen of Ice and Snow! Queen of Ice and Snow! Long live the Queen of Ice and Snow!

Alliance of the South! Long live the Alliance of the South!

— — — Beneath a Tree, under the Moonlight

Leaves sway.

The Hero: “...”

Leaves sway.

The Demon King: “Hero.”

The Hero: “Demon King.”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: “Could you sit beside me?”

The Hero: “Yeah.” *Shuffles.*

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: “Tired?”

The Hero: “Yeah.”

The Demon King: “Me too.”

The Hero: “...”

The Demon King: “...”

The Hero: “I lost.”

The Demon King: “Me too.”

The Hero: “I don't understand.”

The Demon King: “Yeah.”

The Hero: "Why do we win and why do we lose?"

The Demon King: "Yeah."

The Hero: "Demon King."

The Demon King: "?"

The Hero: "Do you regret?"

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "I asked you. About the black powder."

The Demon King: "...Yeah."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "It's my fault."

The Hero: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

Branch breaking.

The Hero: "Ah."

The Female Paladin: "Thanks for your hard work."

The Demon King: "I'm sorry."

The Female Paladin: "But I'm useless too, I lost."

The Demon King: "It's my fault ..."

The Female Paladin: "On that battlefield, I had my doubts. For whom are we bleeding? Is whatever we're fighting for worth all this blood? I questioned if we weren't making a pointless sacrifice."

The Demon King: "It was an unnecessary sacrifice. Today, at least thousands

have died. If I had paid my attention, it wouldn't have..."

The Female Paladin: "..."

The Demon King: "..."

The Hero: "Hey."

The Female Paladin: "?"

The Hero: "...I have an important question for the both of you."

The Female Paladin: "What?"

The Demon King: "At this time?"

The Hero: "Stepping onto the dew soaked leaves, I ran along the grassy plain. The sky was illuminated by the pink evening sun. The world stretches endlessly in all directions, but I only know the path on which I have walked. Even though I wanted to go everywhere, I could not impel myself to go anywhere."

The Female Paladin: "...?"

The Demon King: "—Well."

The Hero: "What is on the other side of the hill? I've been thinking about that."

The Female Paladin: "What are you talking about?"

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "It's simple. What will happen on the other side of the hill? These aren't the words I asked when we first set out. If we managed to reach that hill after going through all kinds of difficulties... But is that it? What are we aiming for? We have been working in curves through the streets. To reach that hill, we have to climb these dew-soaked slopes. The hill is dangerous and far away. But what if we climb to the top of the hill and we saw something we have never seen before?"

The Female Paladin: "...That's—"

The Demon King: "Not dew, this is blood."

The Hero: "Even then."

The Female Paladin: "—"

The Hero: "That's why, I haven't been running. I've been working hard not to run, so I can admire the scenery... But I have no choice. I want to see that something I have never seen before. I come from a broken world and I want to see something else."

The Female Paladin: "Hero..."

The Demon King: "...Hero."

The Hero: "Well."

Wind blows.

The Hero: "Shall we go together?"

The Female Paladin: "—"

The Demon King: "—"

The Hero: "It's a bit embarrassing, but that's not something I can do alone. And I want us to be able to look into each other's eyes as we are standing on top of that hill. We can't do this alone."

The Female Paladin sniffs.

The Demon King nods.

The Hero: "What do you think?"

The Female Paladin: "Good. No, I've always hoped for you to acknowledge that."

The Demon King: "You belong to me. I would never throw you aside."

The Hero: "Yes — Yes!"

The Female Paladin: "You've always been a worrywart. Even though you don't worry enough about yourself."

The Demon King: "That's a good point of the Hero. He has a good and loving heart."

The Female Paladin: "Loving?! What do you know about that!"

The Demon King: "Why shouldn't I know everything about the things that belong to me!"

The Female Paladin: "What do you mean belongs to you, you big-boobed bimbo!"

The Demon King: "Big-boobed bimbo?! Well that's much better than a waterfall."

The Female Paladin: "A waterfall?! How is that a flat thing?"

The Demon King: "If you look at it from a vector's point of view, then it is!"

The Hero: "Oh no, save me."

The Female Paladin: "Hero, you've made a lot of pledges with me in the past. But I'm ready to make a long-term pledge to be by your side. Let's pledge! Let's pledge now!"

The Demon King: "What are you trying to force him into?"

The Female Paladin: "This is a religious ritual from the Holy Order of the Lake."

The Demon King: "Stop twisting religious rituals to your benefit whenever you feel like it! Have you no shame!"

The Hero: "Hey, umm... Let's all try to get along?"

————— The Kingdom of White Night, the Most Opulent Room in the Palace

The Holy Patriarch: "...The Black Knight... escaped..."

The Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "I apologise. He seems to have been taken away by those pesky mercenaries..."

The Holy Patriarch: "...Fine... It's fine...I think. And...the fly...has he been dealt with?"

The Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "He has been executed, Your Holiness."

The Holy Patriarch: "Heh. He did not know his place ..."

Cleric Master: "Your Most Exalted Holiness."

The Holy Patriarch: "...What?"

Cleric Master: "As requested."

The Holy Patriarch: "...Haha, haha, hahahaha."

The Leader of the Hundred Paladins: "What are these?"

Cleric Master: "These are consecrated...they are treasured gems."

The Leader of the Hundred Paladins stares.

The Holy Patriarch: "Hurry... Hurry...in my hands..."

Cleric Master: "Hahaha."

The Holy Patriarch: "They are in my hands... Haha... I have been waiting for this sparkling shine... This abundant magical force... This incessant radiance..."

The Leader of the Hundred Paladins looks confused.

The Holy Patriarch: "The eyes of the Sigiled King..."

— — — Epilogue

Her light slumber was broken by a burning in her chest.

The remains of her terrible dream, red as blood, cold as steel, as painful as rotting flesh; floated away into the mist. She could not bear but to curl up into a ball, keeping her limbs close together in order to endure the pain which was ripping apart her mind.

It would be a mistake to think that she was able to sleep despite the unbearable pain. It was because she could not bear the pain that she chose to sleep.

Compared to the feeling of her body getting ripped apart by anguish, by the inevitable pain and sadness which accompanies her loss, she chose a slumber of unending nightmares.

But the Hero was born.

The world would once again have a Hero.

Her lips mouthed that forbidden name.

Of course, that was already not the name of the Hero. That was the name of the one who had been by her side, those hundreds, those thousand years ago, when she could still feel his body warmth on the surface of the earth.

(Even so...)

For hundreds of years, she hoped to meet him.

For thousands of years, she hoped to meet him.

Amidst her eternity of pain, in the darkness she called for him.

A single teardrop, like the countless others which had come before, rolled down her cheek, leaving a warmth only she could understand.

When she opened her eyes, the land was plunged into the fires of conflict. She could see many formations, each a battlefield of death. The Hero she was so anxious for moved from battlefield to battlefield, from chaos to chaos, from destruction to destruction, and left tranquillity in his wake.

She searched for the Hero in the flames of violence, reached out to him amidst the fire and transmitted her pain. Amidst the symphony of swords against swords, of shouts and yells, within the evil of war, her bright red burning, like forged steel, was felt by him.

This war was her sin, her crime.

Her children who had spread across the world now called out in desperate dejection, each cutting her flesh like innumerable swords.

The cavalry which charged across the land on their steeds.

The infantrymen who took the brunt of the attack on their spears.

The world was plunged into chaos and anarchy. As power-crazy nobility and kings fought over control, they left only a sea of destruction and ruins behind them.

She looked with pain and sadness to the Hero who would bear these for her.

The only one who could prevent the world from degenerating into a wasteland was the Hero. She would definitely support the Hero, as he fought to fulfil the hopes and wishes she herself was never able to.

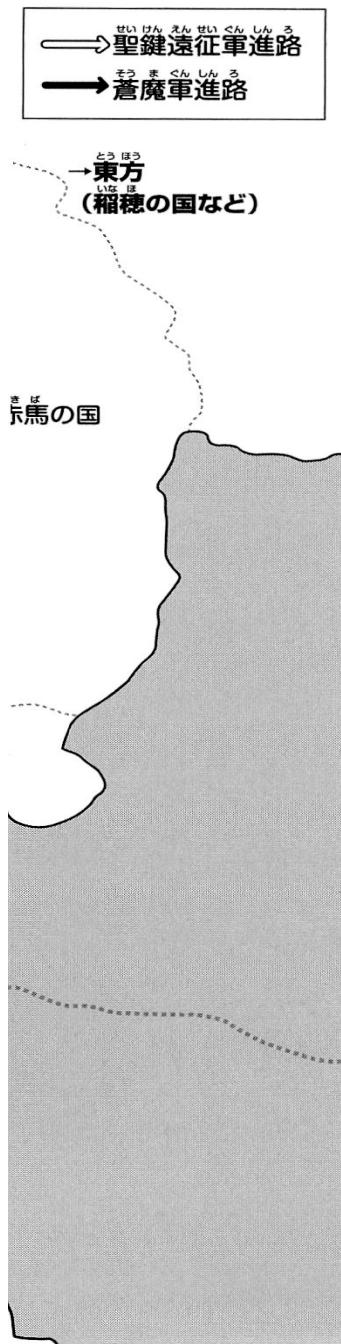
For the pain-filled world.

For the hurt-filled people.

Hoping for salvation to come even a day earlier, the maiden of light and flames shut her eyes. Tears rolled from the corners of her eyes again, but she was used to them, and replied only with the repetition of that forbidden apology.

To be continued in Volume 4 of Maoyuu Maou Yuusha, “The Things These Hands Can Accomplish”

Maps and Explanations



実際にはどこかの国を攻める大義名分^{たいぎめいぶん}が欲しい国が、聖光教会に働きかけて聖鍵軍の名称を賜^{たまわ}るというものだつた。そして、戦争のおこぼれにあざかりたい国が聖鍵遠征軍に参加し、精霊の敵と見なされた国を共同で攻めることで、世界的連合軍となつていたのである。

聖鍵遠征軍は、現在唯一の全世界的連合軍だ。聖光教会の呼びかけによつて、すべての国が軍を拠出し、正義のために戦う……ということになつてゐる。魔族との戦争がなかつた時代には、これはあくまでも名目に過ぎなかつた。

しかし、ゲートの出現と魔族の登場により、聖鍵軍は大きくその性質を変えることとなる。

第一次聖鍵遠征軍は、極大陸のゲートに派遣された。

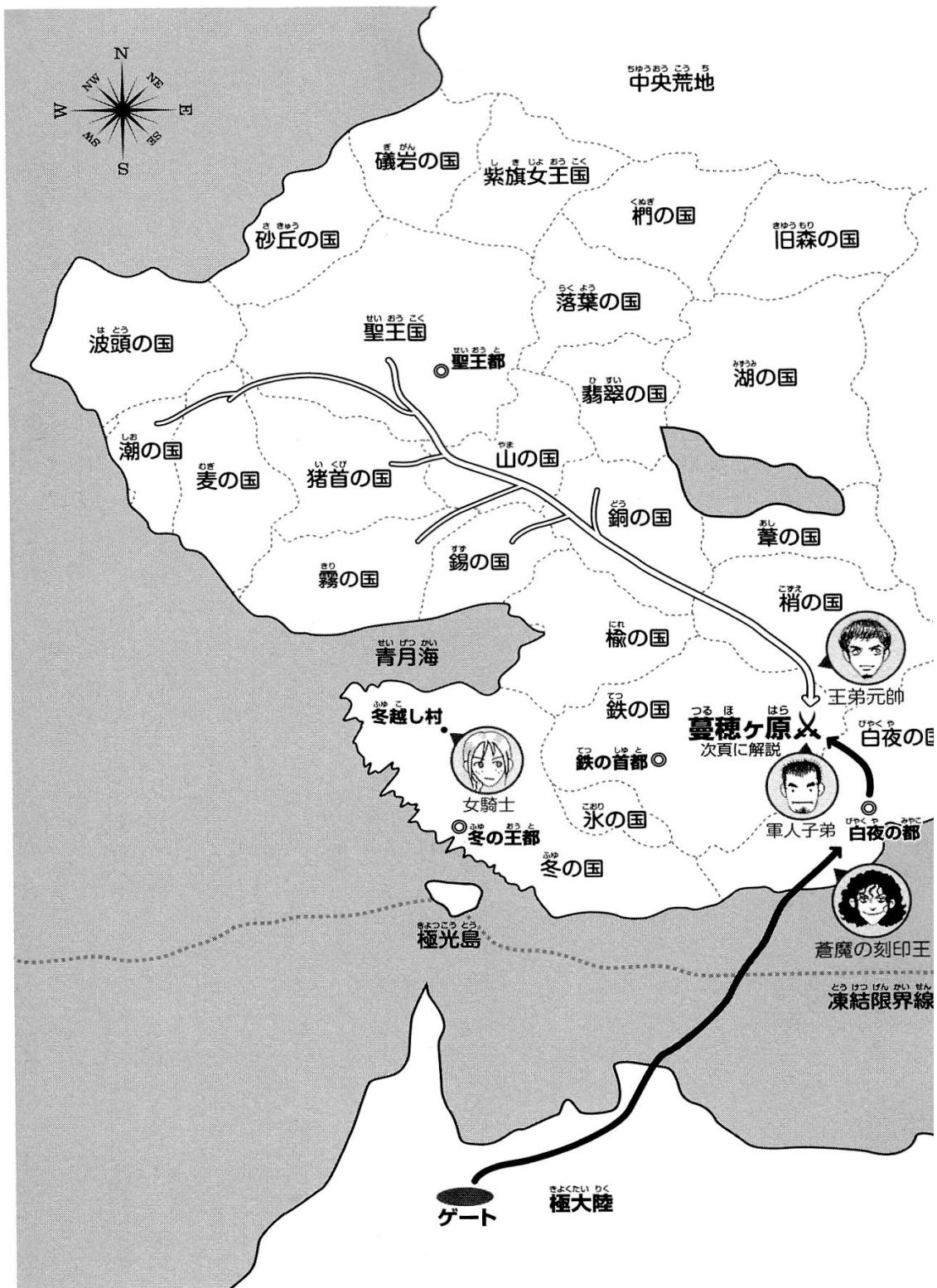
なんらかの封印と見なされたゲートであるがゆえ、もしも邪惡なものがわき出てきた場合、その危険に対応できる聖鍵遠征軍の力が必要と考えられたからだ。

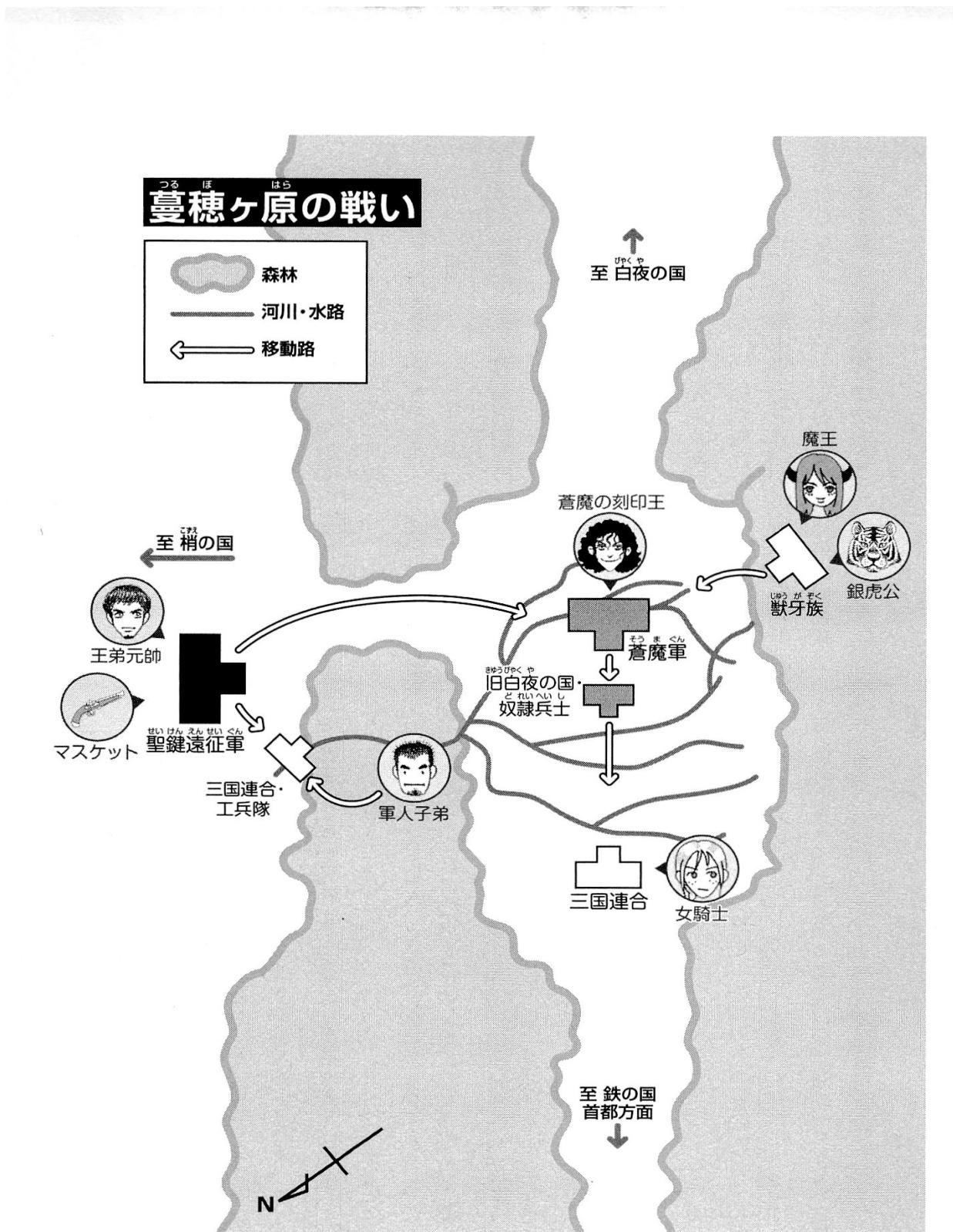
そして、実際、ゲートからは魔族が現れ、人間世界を攻撃してきた。

これによつて聖鍵遠征軍は、魔族と戦う全世界的連合軍にその姿を変えた。第二次聖鍵遠征軍は魔族の都市を占領するという戦果を上げてゐる。そして現在、第三次聖鍵遠征軍が計画され、未曾有^{みぞう}の大戦力で魔界に向かいつつある。

(『聖鍵遠征軍の歴史』聖王國正史編纂室より)

冒險の舞台～聖鍵遠征軍～





— — — The Stage of Danger, the Battle of the Plains of Scilla

The Plains of Scilla was a battle that started between the Tripartite Union and the Army of the Pale, but through three turns of events, it had become a three-sided confrontation.

The order of battle involved ten thousand soldiers from the Tripartite Union and twenty thousand from the Army of the Pale. The Army of the Pale also used cowardly soldiers from the Kingdom of White Night who had surrendered to them. They required no additional training and were deployed as a slave army. Without shields to protect themselves from the arrows of the Tripartite Union, they were sent to charge at the Tripartite Union formations.

The appearance of the slave army shook the forces of the Tripartite Union, but the Commander, the Female Paladin, answered with brutal pragmatism. Having broken the slave army, they entered into combat with the Army of the Pale. Outnumbered and overwhelmed, the Tripartite Union had a hard time maintaining their line and preventing escape and surrender.

The first turn of events was the sudden appearance and attack on the right wing of the Army of the Pale by the Tribe of the Fang. Their defenceless rear was suddenly attacked and thrown into confusion.

The eight thousand warriors of the Tribe of the Pale used the marshy terrain which was impassable to the Cavalry of the Pale and quickly took the upper hand. Had the situation continued, the Army of the Pale would have been sandwiched on both flanks and would certainly have fallen.

The second turn of events was when the Holy Crusaders from the Central Continent appeared and attacked the left wing of the Army of the Pale. This army made no distinction between the Army of the Pale, the Tripartite Union, and the Tribe of the Fang, their new muskets punishing all with equanimity.

The ones who were most thrown into chaos was the Army of the Pale. With the Tripartite Union in front of them, the Tribe of the Fang on the right wing, and the Holy Crusaders on the left; the Army of the Pale was thoroughly enveloped.

The last turn of events was a plan put in motion among the marshes even before the battle had commenced. This was a tactic to set the Plains of Scilla alight and

destroy the enemy forces in a sea of fire.

This plan accomplished more than was intended, completely obliterating the Army of the Pale and decimating the advance unit of the Holy Crusaders. The Tribe of the Fang had thankfully evacuated the area under the orders of the Demon King but suffered many casualties under the muskets of the Holy Crusaders. The Tripartite Union also suffered many casualties due to the muskets but, thanks to the fire attack, was able to retreat without further loss of life.

(Here ends the Initial Battlefield Reports and Observations by the Kingdom of Winter.)

Translation Credits

Translator

- HandsomeBoh (Kai)

Supervisor

- Hantsuki

Editor

- Eira

Typesetter

- Azuris

Translation Group

- *NanoDesu Translations*